* * *

A *Siksikaitsitapi* (Blackfoot) Elder once told me

“as soon as you write it down, it’s wrong”

I suppose he would laugh at what follows.

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Métis or Moniyâw: Explorative stories of decolonizing *my* Métis identity

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Applied Health Sciences

(Leisure Studies)

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In loving memory of the kindest woman I have ever known.

Thank you for all of your love and support in every step I have taken on this journey.

I love you Nana.

Abstract

This thesis explores my emergent processes of identifying as a Métis person through autoethnographic narratives. I provide an overview of Métis history, identification, and decolonization, especially written by and for Aboriginal peoples. Using a decolonizing framework of Indigenous métissage (Donald, 2012) – which brings together complex, and nuanced influences to build knowledge – and an autoethnographic methodology, I explore cultural knowledges through critical self-reflection. I collected autoethnographic data in the form of personal journals and family artifacts; additionally, I shared conversations with other Métis peoples, which I used to further inform my own processes of identification and decolonization. The study results are presented as narrative vignettes, offering conclusions about: a) cultural ambivalence; b) privilege; c) language and music reclamation; and d) building relationships with both people and land. This research builds upon literature by, about, and for the benefit of Aboriginal peoples and settlers and offers considerations relevant to decolonization and identification.

Keywords: Métis, Decolonization, Identity, Autoethnography, Métissage

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Haudenosaunee, Nêhiyâw, Siksikaitsitapi, Siksika, Iyarhe Nakoda and Métis peoples for their generosity in hosting me on their traditional and contemporary territories while I pursued this endeavour. I was accepted as both a Moniyâw (non-Native person) and a Métis person in all of these places as I worked to figure out which one (if not both) that I embody.

This project would not be possible without the tireless, and incredible mentorship given to me by my exceptional graduate supervisor Dr. Mary Breunig. Mary, you consistently set aside your own endeavours to facilitate my processes, you offered advice and direction when I needed it and allowed me space to discover when the time was right. Your patience and openness to new learnings provided me the support and confidence to explore these knowledges. The gifts you offered to me cannot be understated; I am grateful and incredibly lucky to have met you and come to know you both professionally and personally. You are an incredible human being. Thank you.

My supervisory committee: Dr. Greg Lowan-Trudeau and Dr. Margot Francis both consistently offered me exceptional support and thoughtful feedback to assist in developing a truly unique, and ethically rigorous project that I feel very proud of. You are brilliant, kind, honest and amazing people. I owe each of you a deep debt of gratitude. Thank you so much for all your support.

Additionally, the participants in this study are some of the most wonderful people I have had the privilege of knowing. The vulnerability you shared with me through your stories is both beautiful and profound. I am so grateful to know you all. Thank you Kayla, Frances, Sarah B. and Sarah P. Your journeys are inspiring beyond words and I look forward to many more shared memories.

My family members and friends also provided me an incredible amount of support. Whether offering me the stories of my past, encouraging me in times of doubt, giving me safe haven or fielding stress induced phone calls at all hours I am truly lucky to have inherited and encountered so many amazing people in my life. Dad, thank for always offering my your ear when I needed it and for standing behind me; you are such a good man. Mom, thank you for your unwavering belief in me, and for empowering me to embrace the unknown. To my sister Courtney, thank you for listening to my ranting and for always being there in support. I'd also like to thank my Auntie Lee and Uncle Bill for offering me all they could to fill out the stories of our ancestors and for grounding me in a sense of Métisness. Thank you all so very much.

I would especially like to thank my late Nana Barb; Nana was an unendingly kind soul who *always* treated everyone with deep respect. She was so encouraging and always indulged me when I wanted to hear stories about "the relatives". Nana always had time to speak with me and offer me sweet treats. To be in her presence as she slowly moved throughout her old house, singing songs I've never heard was a true gift. Nana passed away approximately halfway through this project and I miss her everyday. Thank you for giving me your unconditional love. I am so much better having known you. I love you so much.

Ninanaskomon (great thanks)

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Chapter One: Introduction

Tansi (Hello).

My name is Bob Montgomery. I spent my youth in Southern Alberta, on traditional Blackfoot (*Siksikaitsitapi*) territory. There, the expansive prairies move westward, toward the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, which stand stoic above the plains. I had the great fortune of spending much of my youth in those mountains. During this project I lived on traditional Haudenosaunee Confederacy land and also moved through Nehiyâw (Cree), Ojibway and Métis lands allowing me to explore many Indigenous homelands. I am grateful to have been to these beautiful areas and to know some of the Indigenous – original – people who live there (Alfred, 2013). I was born male, privileged, upper middle class, and white skinned. In my hometown it was socially acceptable to say and hear racist utterances about First Nations and Aboriginal peoples. It wasn't until my late teenage years that my paternal Aunt asked an archivist to investigate our family history and discovered our Métis ancestry had resided in between present day Pincher Creek and Waterton Lakes National Park.

Métis are recognized as one of three Aboriginal groups in Canada including First Nations, Inuit and Métis according to section 35 of the 1982 Constitution. First Nations in this text refers to members of the community that fall under the Indian Act, identify as status or non-status First Nations, and do not fall within the category of Métis (Burnett & Read, 2012). I will use Indigenous, which normally refers to original peoples of the land (Alfred, 2013), and First Nations interchangeably here to refer to populations within Canada unless otherwise stated. However, when the specific Nation or community of Aboriginal, First Nations or Indigenous people is known, I will use an appropriate

identifier (e.g. Kainai of the Blackfoot Confederacy). The term Aboriginal will extend to Métis populations and Inuit people as cited in section 35 of the Constitution although I do not mention the Inuit in text other than to recognize them as a people here.

Traditionally formed by fur trading and/or settler Europeans and First Nations peoples, the Métis developed cultural groups independent of their contrasting ancestral identities (Lischke & McNab, 2007). Not solely based on race, Métis ethnogenesis – the creation of a culture – led to a collection of similar cultures (MacDougall, 2006; Travers, 2007). There is inconsistency in the etymology of the word Métis. Some scholars submit the word was developed from either the Latin word mixticium, mixticius or miscere "to mix" or "racially-mixed" into the French word Métis which translates to Halfbreed (Douaud, 2007; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Lischke & McNab, 2007), others point to earlier Greek origins (Lowan-Trudeau, 2015a). Still other scholars attempt to disrupt ideas of mixing as a centering point of Métis identity in an effort to avoid essentializing Métis identities (Andersen, 2008; 2014). There are other names given to the Métis, none of them are particularly flattering and many of them are often racist and hurtful, this was due in part to the distaste for miscegenation by some colonizers, which was thought to dilute racial purity (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Richardson, 2004), a point which Métis scholar Chris Andersen (2014) takes up at length.

I was intrigued to discover that my paternal family was Métis, however, I left the information alone because I was unsure how, or if it was even appropriate, to incorporate Indigeneity into my identity; I still carry this feeling of ambivalence[1].

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[1] Ambivalence in this context refers to a difficulty in navigating between two equally legitimate identity narratives and is characterized by uncertainty, desire to belong and

Years later, while working at a residential wilderness therapy program, I had the opportunity to connect with First Nations youth from Nehiyâw (Cree), Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot) and Nakota (Stoney) Nations. During my time with these Indigenous youth I began to uncover an understanding that some Indigenous ways of knowing are not only different from my own, but offer communal, cooperative and holistic ways of connecting with land and culture (Alfred, 2013; Bastien, 2004; King, 2003). By engaging in conversations with Indigenous peoples, I was pushed to critically examine entrenched ideas of my White/Settler/Western worldview. I began questioning narratives of being somehow "better" than my Indigenous brothers and sisters and started to reconsider my own ways of knowing. It was through the youth, Indigenous teachings, and sitting in Siksikaitsitapi ceremonies that I came to see the potential beauty in my nearly erased history although, on some level I knew it was different than what was explained in these ceremonies.

The political climate in Southern Alberta nearing the turn of the 20th century was characterized by racism and aggressive violence toward Indigenous women; this included segregating Blackfoot peoples from their land and removal of ceremonies in Southern Alberta (Bastien, 2004; Carter, 2012). Stories of European men abusing Indigenous women without consequence during settlement are an often untold part of the larger oppressive narratives regarding racial superiority in Canadian history (Carter, 2012; Vibert, 1996). Because of this racist violence my Great-Grandmother (Nana Kay) may have been hesitant to identifying her "Indianness" (Baker, 2005 p. 111). At age five, after her Métis mother passed away, my Great-Grandmother "became white" (B. Montgomery,

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thoughtful engagement in the process of identifying.

personal communication January 2013). Nana Kay later revealed information about her ancestors to my Grandmother. This late life confession is a common way to discover Indigenous ancestry (Richardson, 2004). I cannot imagine the ambivalence, pain and guilt that my Great-Grandmother may have felt having held this secret for so long.

I also cannot blame her for keeping her Indigeneity hidden. Because of the racist contexts of the time, it was dangerous to be labeled "Indian." I would argue that this remains the case in much of Southern Alberta, however there is some emerging recognition, on the part of settlers, of the injustices and asymmetrical power relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples (Alfred, 2013). As a way to confront these racist narratives I am seeking to unlearn my families shared disconnection with our heritage while also incorporating my connection to the land. I have participated in many outdoor experiences through personal and professional outdoor adventures, including canoeing, hiking, and camping on the very land my ancestors both lived on, and originated from. Because of these experiences I came to feel a deep connection to this land. I also feel a connection to my Métis ancestry in this regard because I, like them, have had to move around the country to obtain suitable work; in my case, work in outdoor environmental education and leadership.

In December 2012, I began to witness the strength, leadership, and resilience of Aboriginal people in a new way during the emergence of the Idle No More[2] movement. Idle No More was a peaceful resistance led by Aboriginal peoples and settler allies in response to a variety of oppressive, negligent bills being passed by the Canadian government, which further ignored treaty relationships between First Nations and the

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[2] For more information on Idle No More visit http://www.idlenomore.ca/manifesto

state. These bills opposed many Indigenous cultural and land rights. For example Bill C-45 removed thousands of protections from bodies of water across Turtle Island[3]. Additionally, Idle No More revisited older oppressive legislation such as Bill C-31 which dictates who is a status Indian and who is non-status (King, 2003; Lawrence, 2004). It appears little has changed in the last century regarding how the Canadian government views Indigenous rights and identities (Andersen, 2010; King, 2003; 2012; Lawrence, 2004). The emergence of Idle No More brought a visible, palpable, and communal responsibility and love for land by those who dwell on it, to mainstream culture (Alfred, 2013; Keith, 2013). After a public demonstration and round dance,[4] during Idle No More a good friend told me "today, I am proud to be Indian" (K. Younger, personal communication, December, 2012). Aboriginal people were creating a shift in the present political climate (Alfred, 2013). I was exhilarated; Idle No More accelerated a developing desire to connect to my ancestry.

I now self-identify as Métis because of my family history and a desire to connect culturally as a Métis person; however I was not raised in a recognizably Métis tradition. My motivation for this present research is to explore a deeper understanding of what it means for me to be Métis. To do this I engaged with literature about, for and by Métis peoples, examined familial artifacts, spoke with Métis peoples and critically analyzed my own thoughts and feelings about my Métis identities. I am aware that I carry with me

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[3] Turtle Island is the Indigenous name for North America based on an Indigenous creation story (King, 2003). Turtle Island is used here instead of Canada to shift from colonial narratives.

[4] Round dances are Cree Dances that have all participants dance in a circle holding hands; they were often at the end of Idle No More demonstrations to symbolize community and solidarity.

cultural misconceptions, colonial teachings, tacit traditional knowledge, and socio-cultural privilege afforded to me by "passing" as white (Richardson, 2004; 2006). I incorporate my positional reflections into this research and writing to critically examine my privileges and intersecting issues of class, race, socio-economic status, gender and sexuality. The amalgamation of cultural influences and stories in this study is designed to facilitate the telling of an emerging narrative through carefully chosen avenues. Indigenous research methodologies (Donald, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2001; 2008) and autoethnographic reflections (Denshire, 2014; Ellis, 2004; Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013; Muncey, 2010) provide a framework for the methodology employed in this study. This is where I begin my journey. In humble reciprocity to my ancestors, I aim to honour the land, tradition, relations and my family.

Métis Peoples

Métis self-hood exists on a continuum, from those who are culturally linked with Aboriginal communities to those who have no knowledge of their Indigenous ancestry (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012; Richardson, 2004). These different locations prompt different stories of ethnogenesis however many Métis peoples find ways to embrace their cultures. This culturally self-identifying position remains the anchor for many Métis people today (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Restoule, 2000). By immersing myself in literature about Métis peoples, I am affirming what I intuitively know – the struggles of Métis identities are riddled with complexity (Lawrence, 2004; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012, Richardson, 2004; Short, 2011).

Identifying is a verb based understanding of identity discussed by Restoule (2000) in which Indigenous people engage in navigating, and creating their identities in dynamic

ways rather than settling on any static form of self. I refer to identifying and identification repeatedly throughout the thesis. When seeking to explore any Indigenous identification, it is difficult to ignore colonial narratives that have attempted to disassemble Indigenous ways of life by various means, including assimilation. Colonialism is a process of expropriating land and supplanting that area with a new social, political and cultural order (Alfred, 2013; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Undertaken in a variety of legislative and oppressive processes designed to "kill the Indian to save the man" (Alfred, 2013) Canada's history of, and continued, colonialism affects Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples everyday (Bastien, 2004; King, 2003; 2012, Smith, 2012). Decolonization then is a resistance process of reclaiming traditional learning, land relationships, reciprocity, and autonomous identities (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Bastien, 2004; Simpson, 2004; Smith, 2012). As Indigenous peoples and their settler allies move toward reconciliation in the aftermath of atrocities resulting from colonial history (Lawrence, 2004; King, 2012), I believe it is important to hear voices of Aboriginal individuals and nations alike. Part of the process of listening to those who have been silenced is to find an Aboriginal voice from which to speak.

In studying my Métis identity I began, in earnest, a reclamation of traditional knowledges, understanding contemporary Métis life, and decolonizing my history. I feel it is worth noting that processes of decolonization and identification are complex lifelong journeys; I have been walking, paddling, and moving through these narratives for quite some time. For example I employ the use of reflexive verbs often in my writing as a demonstration of my own emerging Aboriginal worldview which may include an understanding of continual movement between past and future rather than static historical

positions. I will echo Root (2010) by saying "…this paper will draw on conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges as processes: living ways of knowing that are embedded in interconnected relationships rather than a set of discrete facts" (p. 105).

It is not within the scope of this study to offer a complete process of knowing who I am or unraveling centuries of colonization, but rather to document initial efforts in my own understanding of my Métis ancestry and decolonizing processes. That being said, it is my hope that this research will be of interest to Métis peoples who are seeking knowledge of their ancestral and cultural roots (Andersen, 2014); perhaps finding in this writing, avenues to reflect on how their own Métis identification can be mobilized. I also hope to contribute a Métis perspective – albeit an emergent one – to a growing body of social science literature, which recognizes Aboriginal ways of knowing as important discourse for individuals and communities alike (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Bastien, 2004; Cole, 2002; Kovach, 2009; Matsinhe, 2007, Richardson, 2004; Short, 2011; Smith, 2012; Turner, 2010; Wilson, 2008).

Purpose and Research Questions

I present the purpose and research questions in the present tense to acknowledge that they represent ongoing questioning and to articulate the living aspect of the stories they engender. As a person of Métis ancestry, the purpose of this study is to reflect on my Métis identity through journals, historical documents and conversations.

The guiding research questions include:

1. Does exploring my family's historical artifacts and interacting with Métis people, facilitate an understanding of my Aboriginality? If so, how and in what ways?
2. What is my emergent understanding of decolonization and how does it contribute

to my conception of my Aboriginality?

3. How might these understandings of Aboriginality, gained through literature and living as a culturally ambivalent Métis person influence my knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about Métis culture and my identity?
4. How can I employ lessons or insights gained through conversations, personal reflections and artifacts to educate and inform other people who are curious about their Métis identities?

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

I do not know the stories or songs of my people. I know only that these stories must be told, so that we do not remain "Canada's forgotten people" (Lischke & McNab, 2007, p. 1). Thomas King, a Cherokee academic and storyteller writes "The truth about stories, is that's all we are" (2003, p. 2). I feel in order to explore who I am I must listen to the stories of Métis peoples, stories of reclamation, and stories of resilience. Indigenous scholar Toni Culjak (2001) suggests that stories are medicine and are the way to healing. The literature I present in this chapter highlights some ways of coming to know myself as Métis.

Métis peoples can be understood as a collective of cultures amalgamating their complex ancestries into a larger group identity (Lowan-Trudeau, 2012, 2015a; Richardson, 2004). Greg Lowan-Trudeau (2012), a Métis scholar from Alberta, speaks of his research on Métis identity as collecting influences of culture then weaving them into a métissage – a blended whole, whose parts are inseparable but remain in constant relationship to one another. How fitting then, that one of the most recognizable symbols of Métis people is a sash, worn around the waist or shoulder.

> The Métis sash is a finger-woven belt made of wool worn by the Métis for both traditional and ceremonial purposes. The sash is composed of many interconnected threads; the main colours are red, blue, black, white and yellow. Red represents the historical colour of the Métis sash, blue and white symbolize the Métis Nation flag, green signifies fertility, grown and prosperity and black signifies the dark period of Métis history (Hourie & Barkwell, 2006 p.81).

Sashes are functional. Each strand may be pulled from the belt to be used for emergency

sewing. They serve as tump lines for portaging canoes, as rope for carrying goods across the back, or as scarves in cold weather (Goulet & Goulet, 2006). The Métis sash is a recognizable cultural identifier and transformed from a useful item into a cultural artifact. Every piece of Métis culture similarly appears to be a collection of influences joined to create something unique and beautiful, affirming Métis identities. In her dissertation on Métis family history, Tara Turner (2010) suggests that to engage in the telling of a Métis story, one must employ a uniquely Métis position and method. In an effort to embody a Métis way of knowing in my writing, I merge stories and theories together forming a literary métissage (Donald, 2012; Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009). The metaphor of the sash provides a framework for the weaving in of theories, literature, and paradigms – ways of experiencing or viewing the world – I employ in this work. This review is designed to: a) assist the reader in understanding the composition of my Métis identities; b) provide a glimpse into how I situate myself in Métisness; c) identify the barriers to my own sense of belonging in Métis contexts; and d) weave my Aboriginal voice in unison with Métis voices that have spoken before me.

I begin with a brief but nuanced history of Indigenous and Métis people in Canada. I then discuss the complexities of Métis identities summarizing how the Métis have been legally defined in Canada. Later, stories of losses suffered by the Métis are introduced to further explain the difficulties in Métis identity reclamation. I then explore colonization and its effects on Aboriginal peoples generally and Métis peoples in particular. From there, I move to ideas on how the Métis might engage in decolonization collectively and individually. Finally, this chapter closes with a discussion of how recreation and leisure can provide a space for identity reclamation and decolonization of

Métis peoples.

Indigenous and Métis History

European exploration in the late 1600's sparked new development in what is now known as Canada with journeys from English and French people to new worlds (Lawrence, 2002). This process of exploration took place in many parts of the globe and is known as imperialism (Smith, 2012) however it had a particular set of narratives in Canada. Imperialist ideology was an effort to strengthen European powers by accessing resources in new global areas to secure economic superiority (Smith, 2012). Colonization was the means of creating new dominions (e.g. secure trading posts) for the Imperial power (Lawrence, 2002). These new lands were often considered empty (Lawrence, 2002; Smith, 2012) and thus available for incoming European exploration and resource exploitation (Harris, 1994; Lawrence 2002; 2004; Smith, 2012).

Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence (2002) suggests that initially the small numbers of Europeans attempting to secure goods in what is now Canada were of benefit to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples for trade relationships. However, Europeans soon exploited these relationships to assert their Imperial intentions with violence and dominance. These acts were different than the devastating slaughter of Indigenous peoples in Central America by Christopher Columbus' men who cut the hands of those who would not deliver gold to the explorers (Hill, 2010) however equally malicious. For example Lawrence (2002) suggests that Canadian settlement was influenced by mercantile capitalism which instigated intertribal warfare in a nefarious attempt to dispatch Indigenous peoples without directly warring with, or displacing them. Harris (1994), King (2012) and Lawrence, (2004) discuss the narratives of European

supremacy that saturated the early colonizers' justifications for these atrocious acts, land expropriations, and dispossessions.

Furthermore British imperialism was characterized by the enforcement of a "civilized" society that included the slavery of Indigenous peoples, while simultaneously appropriating resources for the British in their search for capitalist superiority and cultural dominance on a global scale (Harris, 1994; Hill, 2010; Lawrence, 2002; Smith, 2012). Indigenous peoples were then expected to acquiesce to European frameworks of politics, social order, and law (Lawrence, 2002). British settlers began to develop large scale settlement, from the Great Lakes region Northward between 1781 and 1830 which sought to abolish or assimilate the Indigenous peoples while acquiring Indigenous lands and segregating Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe (Ojibway) and other Indigenous peoples to reserves (Boyden, 2010; Lawrence, 2002).

Before, and during this time, mixed communities had begun to form between Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, Anishnaabe and European peoples in the Great Lakes region (Travers, 2007). By the mid 1800's these populations were developing their own ethnogenesis, and although not necessarily calling themselves Métis, have contemporarily maintained this identity (Andersen, 2014). Despite their early emergence, Great Lakes Métis communities are contentious in academia and information on these communities is scarce, however Travers (2007) reports that Métis culture is alive and well in the Great Lakes region.

Other communities have adopted the Métis name as well. For example Andersen (2010) explores the mixing of Mi'kmaq peoples and early visitors in the maritime regions during early settlement. While being absorbed into their Mi'kmaq mother's community

this group largely defined themselves as Mi'kmaq; however, recently there has been a large emergence of people in the Maritime Provinces who identify as Métis (Andersen, 2010). Contemporary claims to Métisness by these populations has led to debates between Métis and Indigenous scholars about the legitimacy of these communities' identifications as Métis (Andersen 2010; 2014). For example Andersen (2014) submits that Métis should not be used as a catch-all term or "soup kitchen" (p. 24) for Indigenous communities who are neither First Nations or Inuit despite being similarly disenfranchised. I do not enter into this debate here, but rather sketch out these discussions in order to highlight the contemporary breadth of Métis identities whether they legitimatized in discourse or not. I often return to Andersen's arguments later in the thesis.

The documented histories of Métis peoples are complicated by Canadian colonialism. The Canadian government expropriated what is now Northern Ontario and Manitoba with the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1867 (Lawrence, 2002). This piece of land was a prosperous area for fur traders and the transfer was not well received by Métis peoples in the region. Patrick Douaud (2007) describes the movement of Métis people from the Great Lakes region to the settlement at Red River as a result of "aggressive colonization," which "forced those half-breeds to take refuge among Indian tribes or in the Red River area of Manitoba" (p. 2). Métis soldiers, led by Cuthbert Grant Jr. had already established a presence in the area surrounding the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers by pushing out settlers who threatened their agricultural, trapping and hunting way of life during the battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 (Douaud, 2007).

The ethnogenesis within Ruperts Land of Métis peoples in areas such as Ile-à-la-Crosse (now located in Northern Saskatchewan) had similarly been established prior to encroaching colonization (MacDougall, 2006). Due to the difficult topography and climate of the region, fur traders required the expertise of Cree and Ojibway peoples to be able to survive, and their descendants were labeled Halfbreeds and later as Métis. The responsibility of survival fell largely on women, who provided community, comfort and skills to the naïve young European men (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; MacDougall, 2006). Dorion and Préfontaine (2001) remark at the misrepresentation and erasure of women's roles in the fur trade due to the patriarchal nature of historical documentation; this is a common story in most Canadian and colonial histories. However, there is movement toward reclaiming stories of women's essential roles in the survival of Aboriginal and Métis peoples (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; MacDougall, 2006; Mackinnon, 2012). MacDougall (2006) highlights the strong familial ties that Métis men had to their Indigenous or Métis wives. Additionally, she articulates that during the fur trade, women worked alongside men in many cases without equivalent pay as fishers, trappers and camp organizers. Familial ties were so strong in some communities that if a member of a family were to leave one company for another, the rest of the family would leave with them. It is worth noting that the emergence of Métis peoples was founded on Indigenous women's ability to live off the land and their acceptance of newcomers into their communities. These strong kinship networks set the stage for resistance to incoming colonizers during the purchase of Rupert's Land.

Movement Westward, below the Great Lakes, into what is now Manitoba happened alongside movement Northwest toward Rupert's Land (Devine, 2004; Douaud,

2007; Weinstien, 2007). After the sale of Rupert's Land, there was an interim period of no occupation by either the Canadian government or HBC (Boyden, 2010; Lawrence, 2002). The Red River settlement was an epicenter of Métis consciousness and gave birth to what is now considered the Métis Nation with large populations of both English and French speaking Métis (Devine, 2004; Douaud, 2007; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Weinstein, 2007), a contested grouping given the myriad of Métis communities described above (Andersen, 2014; Lawrence, 2004). Nevertheless the Métis of Red River declared themselves a new Nation in approximately 1812, and demanded autonomous rights because of the influx of settlers to the area (Andersen, 2014; Foster, 2007; Weinstein, 2007). Settlers continued to threaten the emerging Métis nation and this was perhaps a precursor to the settler-colonialism – an assertion of settler cultural dominance over Indigenous peoples – that exists today. This pressure from settler movement to the Red River area led to the development of a provisional government by Métis people in an effort to have their land rights recognized by the Canadian government (Weinstien, 2007).

A resistance effort, led by Louis Riel, was staged against the Canadian government culminating with the Red River Resistance in 1869 (Boyden, 2010; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Weinstien, 2007). Following this resistance, the Canadian government conceded land and language rights to the Métis with the Manitoba act of 1870, however, these claims were later ignored, forcing Métis further westward to join or form Métis communities in Saskatchewan and Alberta (Boyden, 2010; Weinstien, 2007) where another resistance was staged near Batoche in 1885. This battle was a defeat for the Métis and led to the hanging of Louis Riel for high treason.

Much of the historical literature about the Métis focuses on the Red River Settlement in particular as the birth of Métis nationalism; however as explained earlier, this place is certainly only one of many communities who identify as Métis. Additionally, Dorion & Préfontaine (2001) point out that most historical literature highlights the militaristic contexts and primarily the role of military men in the development of Métis people. This military focus is very limiting and essentialist and offers little in the way of understanding complex Métis ethnogenesis. Devine (2004) Dorion & Préfontaine (2001) and Goulet and Goulet (2006) recognize how oral histories of Métis people were ignored in favour of a Eurocentric telling of history. There is so much lost by only reading the European male accounts of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2002).

Métis History and Identity

Métis identity can be understood as a culture emerging from the complex mix of French, Cree, Anishnaabe (Ojibwa), Salteaux, Scottish and a variety of other Indigenous and European cultural backgrounds (Campbell, 1973; Lawrence, 2004; Lischke & McNab, 2007). Symbols, such as the sash, a specific type of fiddle (violin) playing, jigging, and even a unique Métis language called Michif, create shared meaning amongst some Métis peoples demonstrative of a unique set of cultural identities (Bakker & Barkwell, 2006; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Weinstien, 2007). Additionally, due to the complexities of the dominance and assimilative tactics of settlers described earlier, Métis identities and culture were often under threat and hidden away.

Métis people in Richardson's (2004) dissertation for example, ranged from being wholly integrated in dominant culture, integrated in Indigenous culture, or to varying degrees of cultural identity blending directly related to their exposure to their culture. Of

course, Métis peoples are not alone in having to navigate contemporary, settler-colonial narratives while also attempting to maintain and affirm their own cultural identities as this is also the case for many First Nations peoples (Andersen, 2014; Restoule, 2000).

Métis identities were being created *before* the development of a Canadian Nation state and are sometimes characterized by resistance to being Canadian (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). Métis peoples, as well as many First Nations, sought autonomy rather than being subsumed under Canadian customs and laws (Boyden, 2010; Lawrence, 2004; Weinstein, 2007). Despite their multiple cultural origins, Métis peoples developed into a unique set of cultures that continues to evolve. It is important to make note here of the narratives of mixing whether referring to race or culture (Andersen, 2014). Racial purity is a myth due to mixing throughout all "races." As Easthope (1998) contends "…who or what is not hybrid? And if everything is hybrid, the term would cancel all the way through" (p. 342). This discourse may also be said for culture – to state that Métis culture is simply a mix of European and First Nations culture is to delegitimize the complexity and growth of Métis culture as whole (Andersen, 2014).

After the 1885 Northwest resistance, and the hanging of their leader Louis Riel, many Métis began to develop new identities in their respective communities (Lawrence, 2004; MacDougal, 2006). Because they were displaced from a collective area, Métis were forced to live in small factions and thus may have lost some collective re-enforcement of cultural identification. The time following the battle at Batoche is regarded as a dark period for the Métis (Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Goulet & Goulet, 2006). They were displaced by the Canadian Government, faced racism from their neighbours, and marginalization from many communities while they were forced to live on crown land

(Campbell, 1973; Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Lischke & McNab, 2007; Teillet, 2007). Most Métis were not involved in treaty conversations; instead, they were offered scrip which is compensation in the form of either a small piece of land or a small amount of money (Adese, 2011; Andersen, 2014; Teillet, 2007). Due in part to the individualized nature of scrip there was little unified effort for land claims by the Métis after Batoche. This separation of a larger community and kinship relationships led to a severing of Métis collective identity forcing cultural practice into small factions hidden away from the settler communities (Lischke & McNab, 2007). However, as Lischke and McNab (2007) state, "we are still here" (p. 1) learning to reclaim Métis identities.

Legally Defining the Métis

Métis peoples are racialized by discourse within academia as well as through legislative means in Canada, which both seek to define and influence public perceptions of them (Andersen, 2014; Lischke & McNab, 2007). Travers (2007) describes the racialization of Métis peoples: "Unfortunately, a group who emerged precisely because race did not matter has since the 1900's come to be entirely defined by it" (p. 235). Often Métis people have to choose to identify as Métis, assimilate to European culture by passing (Richardson, 2004; 2006), or attempt to fit within the reserve system of their First Nations cousins (Lischke & McNab, 2007; Teillet, 2007). This is still happening in some communities due to the complex colonial laws regarding status which are conflated with Métis identities and rights as peoples (Andersen, 2014).

It is worth noting that Métis peoples are not alone in struggling with issues of identification. There are many complications with definitions concerning most

Indigenous peoples, including First Nations,[5] however, this chapter is dedicated primarily to the identities of Métis peoples. Legal debates about what it means to be Métis and who fits into that definition are complicated and dominated by Canadian policy and legislation (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Lawrence, 2004; Lischke & McNab, 2007; Teillet, 2007). Métis peoples have and continue to be largely defined by non-Aboriginal peoples and governmental organizations (Andersen, 2010; Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; Lawrence, 2004; Travers, 2007). Perhaps the most recognizable group of Métis descend from the Red River settlement near present day Winnipeg however, as I have demonstrated, Métis peoples have emerged in a very large section of what is now Canada and United States (Douaud, 2007; Lawrence, 2004; Lischke & McNab, 2007).

The legal definition of Métis peoples shifted when the Supreme Court of Canada handed down the Powley decision in 2003 which protected constitutional hunting and fishing rights to a Métis family near Sault St. Marie in Ontario leading to a larger discussion about who is – and consequently, who is not – Métis (Andersen, 2014; Teillet, 2007). This decision is often utilized in discussions about Métis peoples as a benchmark for defining both individual, and more specifically, group Métis identities based on the collective culture claimed by peoples of European and Indigenous descent (Andersen, 2014; Teillet, 2007).

Andersen contends that rather than assisting in identification, Powley co-opted the definition of Métis once again defining it within the context of the colonial governments through the judicial system. Thus, it is evident that even within the Métis themselves,

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[5] See King (2012), Lawrence (2004), Smith (2012), and Hokowhitu et al. (2010) for additional resources and definitions.

disagreements exist regarding identification and limitations are put in place by provincial Métis councils (Andersen, 2014). I am lucky enough to fall into the category whose ancestors spent time in, and had kinship ties to, the Red River Métis. However, even within my family, there are significant complications for achieving membership.

My Great-Grandmother's birth certificate, which was destroyed in a fire, is required before my membership in the Métis Nation of Alberta can be finalized. Thus I am in limbo for receiving legitimacy from Métis governmental organizations for my membership. Despite this legislative barrier to my validation as a Métis person, I do not always feel defined by these policies. I believe it is my right to self-identify as Métis given my ancestry. My cultural link is felt most strongly through stories and photographs of my ancestors. If I were to receive membership in the Métis Nation of Alberta, however, I may have legal advantages in light of new legislation and Court decisions.

In 2013, a Supreme Court decision was granted to the Manitoba Métis giving them claims to land that were lost during the 1870 Red River resistance (Manitoba Métis Federation Inc. v. Canada, 2013). Additionally Métis people and Non-status Indians were granted legal title as Indians under the constitutional act on January 8, 2013 (Daniels v. Canada, 2013).

These decisions have not been easily won; the recognition of Métis as status Aboriginal people by the Canadian government comes after 13 years of Court battles (Daniels v. Canada, 2013). Additionally, the land claims process that began in 1869, will continue to be a difficult story for Métis people.

Métis Stories of Identity and Loss

Maria Campbell writes about being a Métis woman in her seminal auto-biography

Halfbreed (1973). This story is a powerful and vulnerable narrative that displays the difficulties faced by Métis peoples when they are separated from their communities (Culjak, 2001). Her writing serves as a microcosm of larger Métis stories of loss and resilience. Donald (2012) identifies autobiographical accounts as a powerful decolonization tool or a retelling of resistance. When Campbell recounts her life growing up in a Métis village where people would gather to play fiddle, jig, and eat communal meals in the summertime she articulates a unique sense of community kinship among her Métis relatives. However, during her lifetime, her family was pushed aside and disregarded by the Canadian government. Her story is a familiar one for Aboriginal peoples in general, indeed the Western Métis experience similar marginalization (Weinstien, 2007). For example, Campbell's ancestors were given wild land to farm that could not yield crops due to its poor quality. Similarly, Métis peoples were often not included in the reservation lists despite some of them looking dark-skinned enough to pass as First Nations peoples. Left to the margins, some Métis lived in ditches on crown land; they were nicknamed "road allowance people" (Campbell, 1973, p. 13). Other Métis looked white enough to appear as immigrants or settlers otherwise known as passing (Richardson, 2004). Adese (2011) and Andersen (2014) state that the policy makers at the time were ill equipped and made ad hoc divisions between the two, offering either scrip or treaty to individuals thereby categorizing Métis and First Nations people (Andersen, 2014). The segregation put in place by policy makers was complex but not solely based on race.

My Grandmother spoke of the embarrassment felt by her mother – My Nana Kay – in having Métis ancestry; she attributed her dark skin to a more acceptable racial

identity and later passed as a white person. While I have benefited from privileges of being white-skinned, this is not the case for all Métis people (Richardson, 2004; 2006). In many cases, people don't realize their Aboriginal heritage until much later in life (Richardson, 2004). In the west Métis tended to be given unworkable land or land that was not congruent with their traditional farming practices, e.g., riverfront lots were substituted with square lots containing no waterfront for irrigation (Boyden, 2010; Campbell, 1973; Douaud, 2007). The Métis occupy an in-between space and often suffer subjugation from both cultural backgrounds. In their collection of essays, Lischke and McNab (2007) document heartbreaking accounts of what various Métis groups endured and continue to endure in Canada but also, accounts of resistance to settler-colonialism.

Contemporary Métis live across the country, in cities, on reserves, as well as in unique Métis communities that sprung from the post resistance dispersal (Bell, 1994; Goulet & Goulet, 2006; Kinew, 2012; Lawrence, 2004). Drummond Island, Lac St. Anne, Batoche, and Elizabeth Métis settlements are examples of specific Métis communities that strive to maintain traditional cultural ties (Bell, 1994; Boyden, 2010; Travers, 2007).

In Alberta, uniquely designated Métis settlements are a response to a longstanding land rights lawsuit between Métis leaders and the Alberta government; this agreement created eight Métis settlements with local control over their communities, which offers a place for Métis people to rebuild their cultural identities (Bell, 1994; Richardson, 2004). These settlements remain a strong part of Métis identity in Alberta (Bell, 1994).

Hybridity, Third Space and Métissage as Identity

The idea of hybrid identities comes primarily from postcolonial literature best summarized in the work of Homi K. Bhabha (1994). Postcolonialism is a school of

thought that stems from anti-colonial resistance following the independence of nations that were once colonies of European Imperials (Nayar, 2010). Colonialism happened differently in Asian countries than it did in commonwealth countries such as Canada and New Zealand (Donald, 2012) where settler-colonialism remains. Bhabha built upon Edward Said's work, and critiqued Said's polarization of the Oriental (east) and the Occidental (west) as cultural positions. Bhabha's book *The Location of Culture* gives an important assessment of these static cultural reference points. He insists that the confluence of the two disparate cultural positions creates a negotiated hybrid or third space, which is the focus of Bhabha's postcolonial work. He suggests that third space is a tumultuous "alien territory" (p. 56) where a hybridity forms a new and distinct identity. Richardson (2004) draws upon Bhabha's model to develop a Métis third space, which she argues is a hybrid of Euro-Canadian and Indigenous cultures. Third space attempts to disrupt the idea of the cultural binaries common in Western society (Bhabha, 1994; Dorion & Préfontaine, 2001; King, 2003; Root, 2010; Smith, 2012). One such cultural binary is the assumption that people are either Indigenous or not, which serves to delegitimize hybrid peoples (Lawrence, 2004). Richardson (2004; 2006) suggests Métis people exploring their identity should spend time in Métis specific communities to develop cultural knowledges. In contrast to Bhabha's tumultuous description, Richardson's (2004; 2006) position is that this Métis third space is a safe place of belonging; where cultural norms can be established and fostered. This space can also be created theoretically in the absence of a physical area, as Tara Turner (2010) suggests in her dissertation on her Métis family history. Richardson (2004; 2006), Lowan-Trudeau (2012) and Turner (2010) build upon Bhahba's (1994) third space in specific Métis

contexts because it provides them a platform for blending two cultures, thus producing a separate Métis space. It is here, they suggest, in the company of other Métis people, where cultural belonging may be achieved and actualized (Richardson, 2004). "Métis identity is created through a process of social interaction and dialogic relationships between the inner world and the external world" (Richardson, 2006, p. 57). Richardson also submits that Métis people who have blended into dominant culture can, by occupying Métis third space and reconnecting with their cultural backgrounds, reclaim traditional knowledges. "An important act of resistance for hybrid people is to develop third space on their own terms" (Richardson, 2004 p. 51). Indeed there are very few Métis specific spaces in which to formulate identities or engage in an identification process. Her third space model (see Figure 1 below) identifies challenges for Métis peoples seeking to sift through the colonized discourse and reclaim their knowledges. Richardson (2004) suggests this model offers a safe ground for Métis people where they can reconnect with their history within Métis specific contexts between First Nations spaces and dominant Euro-Canadian spaces (Richardson, 2004). All other areas occupied by Métis peoples may lead to feelings of being outsiders (Richardson, 2004 p. 49).

I think Richardson's analysis is incomplete given the breadth of cultural understandings Métis people's experience. I have not always felt "safe" in Métis spaces partly because of the difficulty in "proving" Métis membership even within the Western Métis groups. I have at times felt uncomfortable entering into this Métis third space. My personal experiences of being situated in Western-European culture has been a barrier, (i.e. I am uncertain whether I am entitled to enter Métis spaces). Thus, engaging in Métis culture for me is more reminiscent of Bhabha's tumultuous description regarding hybrid

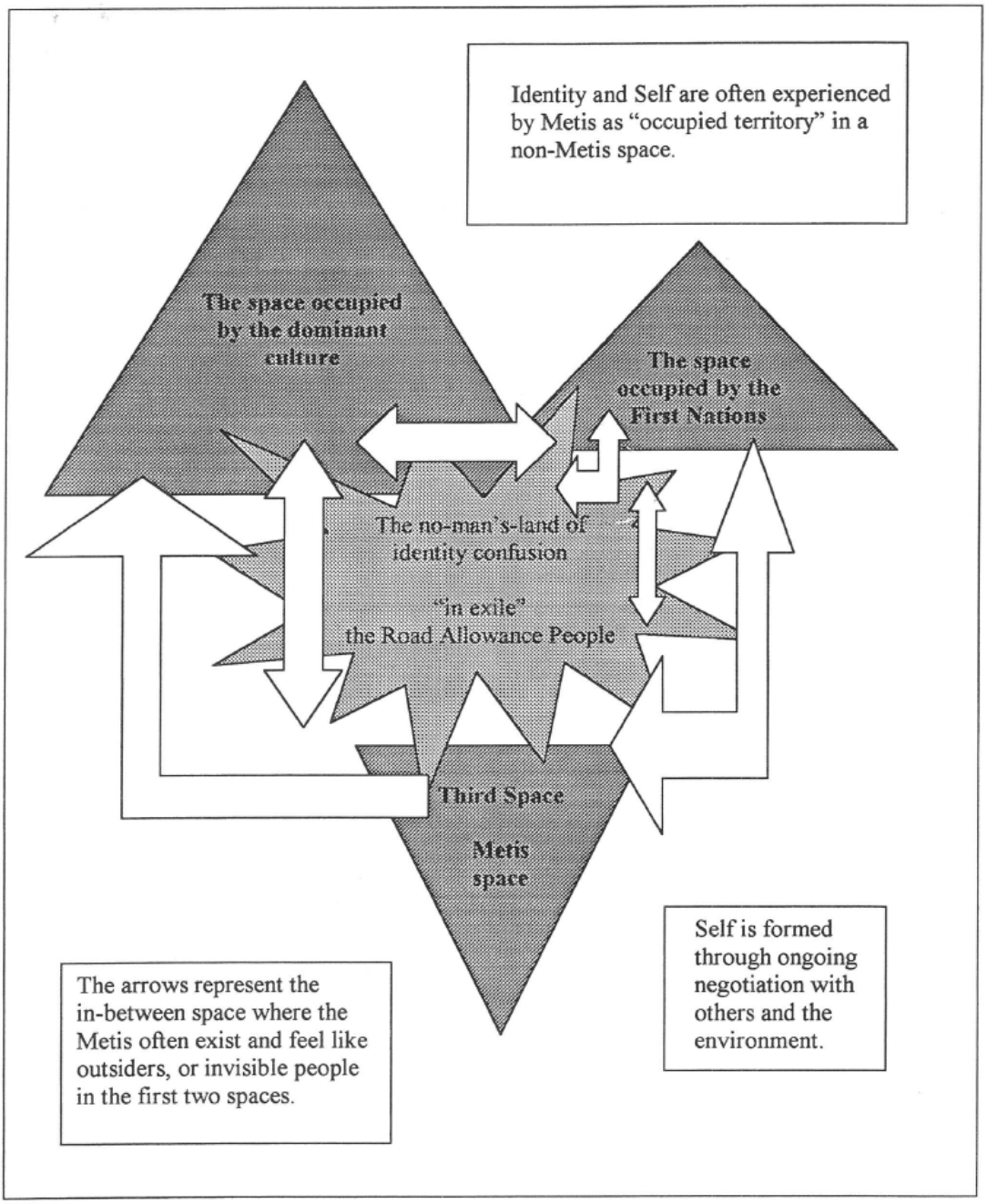

Figure 1. Richardson's (2004) third space model of Métis identity.

spaces. Perhaps Métis space could be similarly isolating to those who have been only immersed in one culture or the other. What would prompt someone to step into this tumultuous space?

Additionally, I believe it is problematic to position this hybrid culture as a

desirable end point for Métis people seeking identification. I will echo Donald's (2012) sentiment that the idea of a hybrid identity is always utilizing a comparison from a colonial perspective. In essence, colonialism is still defining a "hybrid" culture because hybridity cannot happen without the confluence of the colonial identity. While some Métis scholars use Bhabha's third space as a tool for conceptualizing Métis identities, Andersen (2014) suggests that tropes of hybridity eventually serve to undermine collective Métis peoplehood by positioning them primarily as hybrid rather than engaging other legitimizing characteristics of Métis cultures. He suggests this essentialist stance further racializes and delegitimizes Métis peoples. I would like to state here that historically and contemporarily positioning Métis peoples identities as blended, mixed, hybrid etc. is, in my view, misguided. As an example, Culjak's (2001) discusses narratives where women engage Métis identification and then retreat into Indigenous spaces at different times throughout their lives because they may feel more belonging in their Indigenous identities. In my experience the importance of self-identification in a community or culture is an essential piece of identity (Teillet, 2007). A more appropriate avenue toward identification could be seeking out facets of Métis culture that emerged during and after ethnogenesis such as group identity and self-identification.

Taiaiake Alfred, (2013) a Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) scholar maintains that Indigenous people should be referred to by their nation and in their language as a marker of their autonomy and diversity. King (2012) suggests there is no conceivable way to reduce all First Nations people to "Indian" (p. xiii) or Indigenous or First Nations. Lawrence (2004) echoes King in the recognition that it would be as reductive to point to all Métis people under one banner as it is to position all First Nations people or

Indigenous people under the same names. Often, hegemonic cultural groups use universal binary descriptions, which serve to delegitimize claims from cultural others (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Richardson, 2004). Because I contain complexities in identity, I believe that there is less of a blending and more weaving of different influences into a métissage (Donald, 2012; Lowan-Trudeau, 2011; 2012). Weaving implies that the strands – of a sash for example – are in relationship to one another but do not fuse or become the same at any point. My movement into and away from Métis culture is demonstrative of what Donald (2012) describes as existing in the tension of Indigenous métissage. This idea emerged from the postcolonial literature on hybridity however, Donald (2012) reclaims Indigenous métissage as a way "…to support the emergence of a decolonizing research sensibility that provides a way to hold together the ambiguous, layered, complex, and conflictual character of Aboriginal and Canadian relations without the need to deny, assimilate, hybridize, or conclude" (Donald, 2012, p. 536).

I believe Indigenous métissage is a more appropriate avenue for conceptualizing Métis identification. This complex weaving of relationships, contradictions and tensions resonates with my experiences in navigating my identities. By positioning myself within the colonial discourse I am better able to situate my experiences in relation to others without assimilating or expropriating. For example, I have experienced resonance with many parts of Cree and Blackfoot cultures, as well as "Canadian" cultures intertwined with moments of Métis culture; all these experiences influence my developing worldviews as a Métis person.

Métis identities, in this context, are fluid and holistic, incorporating spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual segments (Lane Jr., Brown, Bopp, Bopp, & Elders,

1989; Richardson 2004; 2006; Wall, 2009). It is important however, to be cognizant that such traditional knowledges are often presented as static (Smith, 2010). Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith (2010) suggests that while engaging in conversations that adhere to traditional practices, it is important to remember that traditions are socially constructed and can reinscribe dominant discourse thus reifying colonial ideology. For example, Smith argues that while some members of Native communities focus on political sovereignty and decolonization they often ignore violence against Indigenous women and gender non-conforming peoples, which are seen as matters that can be put aside until an undetermined future (Smith, 2010). Similarly, Alfred (2013) gives the example of re-creating traditional tribal governments among Kanien'kehaka, only to have them behave in the same way as colonial governments. All this serves to point toward the importance of an intersectional analysis and decolonizing frameworks of Indigenous métissage. In order to engage in Métis identification, simultaneous efforts must be made to address intersecting issues of colonialism, racism, heteronormativity and sexism. It is not easy to navigate tensions between Métis and settler cultures, particularly when these cultures are closely linked in the contexts of layered oppressions. Consequently, remaining critical and reflexive is essential to decolonizing processes (Alfred, 2013; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Donald, 2012; Smith, 2010).

(Post?)Colonialism

As a colonized person seeking to reclaim my Indigeneity, I am interested in disassembling the ways I re-enact colonial ideologies. Postcolonial thought has influenced decolonizing literature (Alfred, 2013). Decolonization – in the form of Indigenous métissage – offers an extension of my emerging worldview and provides a

"theory as more" (Anfara & Mertz, 2006 p. xxiii) structure to research. Indigenous métissage incorporates a complex and nuanced understanding that has influenced my worldview and is beginning to inform each idea, experience, and relationship I encounter. Prasad (2005) states that there are multiple directions postcolonial learning can take and I would submit that the same may be said of decolonization (Donald, 2012; Simpson, 2004). This idea is congruent with the overlapping, intersecting identities expressed in Indigenous métissage by Aboriginal peoples and is thus relevant and complimentary to my research endeavour.

Colonialism, postcolonialism and decolonization.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), a Maori researcher and author of *Decolonizing Methodologies* – a seminal text in Indigenous scholarship – discusses the importance of decolonizing spaces in resistance to Eurocentric ideals of constructed superiority and hierarchy. Smith identifies the problematic appropriation of Indigenous knowledges by colonizers and Imperialists without due consent and reciprocity. Colonizers across the globe positioned land, artifacts and culture as goods to be exploited for the benefit of Europeans (Smith, 2012). She goes on to report that anthropologists who were curious about different cultures felt little need to problematize their rights to Indigenous knowledges. This process was primarily done in the name of science and discovery. She suggests that the narratives of colonizers and settlers usurped opportunities for tribal knowledges of Indigenous peoples to be situated equally within Western discourse. The dominating behaviour of colonists past and present cannot be understated (Alfred, 2013). Indeed, Canada remains in a colonial state, often referred to as a settler-colonial state rather than a postcolonial one. The difference between Canada and a postcolonial state

such as India for example, is that postcolonialism marked the period of large scale exodus in the latter, where settlers remain present – and indeed dominant – in colonial Canada (Donald, 2012). This distinction between postcolonial and settler-colonial states is an important one because it contextualizes the tactical resistance of decolonization (Donald, 2012; Richardson, 2006; Simpson, 2004).

Many Indigenous researchers, such as Alfred (2013), Bastien (2004), Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi (2009), and Simpson (2004) embody an anticolonial discourse in their resistance to colonization. The reason many Indigenous writers do not identify as postcolonial writers is their collective resistance to the implication that colonialism is over (Smith, 2012). Smith (2012) quotes Australian Aborigine activist Bobbi Sykes who stated "What? Post-Colonialism? Have they left?" (p. 25). The underlying assumption of colonization is that because imperial countries have now ceded autonomy to their new nations, they are no longer colonies. While this is structurally true, what is left behind is the hegemonic repression of Aboriginal people by settlers. The continuation of colonial narratives, destruction of Indigenous society – thought of as inferior to settler society – and the corresponding supplanting of settler worldview by dishonoring Indigenous worldviews contributes to settler-colonialism (Donald, 2012 p. 551) thereby giving colonization a new form. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) use the idea of a colonial shapeshifter to describe the ever-changing face of colonialism while remaining true to its goals of domination and assimilation. Decolonization has been undertaken by Aboriginal peoples as a process of reclaiming their land and identity (Smith, 2012). Similarly, Simpson (2004) and Smith (2012) use the idea of indigenizing to describe processes of centering Indigenous epistemologies in Western settings.

Taiaiake Alfred (2013) speaks eloquently about nation-to-nation agreements disregarded by colonial governments through land repossession. His experience in legislative land claims, Indigenous policy and Indigenous governance has provided him a breadth of understanding decolonization processes (Alfred, 2013). Similarly, Métis scholar Iseke-Barnes (2003) writes about living and writing Indigenous resistance in the context of the academy. Some Indigenous, Métis and Western scholars offer solutions for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to decolonize. The following are examples of their decolonizing trajectories.

Reclaiming spaces of education (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012), confronting gender violence (Smith, 2010), developing relationships with Aboriginal peoples and spending time on the land (Root, 2010) are some avenues undertaken in decolonization. Similarly, connecting to land, spending time with Elders and even decolonizing one's diet by eating local, non-processed food represent potential solutions (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Aboriginal peoples are engaging in decolonization to dispel myths of victimization present in the colonial discourse (Bastien, 2004).

Educational institutions are important and contested spaces for Aboriginal people. As Haig-Brown (2008), Kovach (2009), and Smith (2012) point out there is continued resistance from settlers in the academy toward Indigenous epistemologies. Gaudry and Hancock (2012) offer that by occupying academic settings, Aboriginal peoples have a chance to recognize colonialism as well as expose cracks in its foundation. There is now a First Nations University in Plains Cree Territory designed specifically to facilitate First Nations ways of knowing (Kinew, 2012). In settler-colonial academic settings, the recognition of Indigenous epistemologies is often met with resistance from more

traditional positivist paradigms (Haig-Brown, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). For example Haig-Brown (2008) discusses her experiences at a conference held on emerging discourses of Indigenous ways of knowing. Some participants of the workshop spoke about their distaste for having to accept such abstract epistemologies in the academy. Because colonial teachings are so pervasive in settler experience, it was difficult for the participants to imagine such different ways of viewing the world.

Indigenous specific writing in academic settings such as Haig-Brown's (2008) example is evidence of an attempt on the part of Aboriginal peoples to build a relationship with settler nations. Speaking English, for example, is already a concession on the part of Aboriginal people to engage in collective discourse (Alfred, 2013; Simpson, 2004). That said, there is also emerging Métis specific worldviews and research trajectories (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Turner, 2010). This research study will contribute to advancing Métis ways of knowing in academia by adding stories of cultural engagement which may parallel First Nations decolonization.

Colonialism is placed within the collective Canadian consciousness as a past event (Alfred, 2013). While it is true that colonialism marks a large part of early contact with British and French explorers, colonial narratives are very much a part of the present Canadian moment (Alfred, 2013; Bastien, 2004). For example, historical colonialism utilized gendered violence against women as a primary means to control and dominate the Indigenous populations, which continues today (Smith, 2010). Patriarchy also remains an ally of colonialism as they continue to coalesce in their attempts to silence Indigenous women (Anderson, Innes & Swift, 2012; Martin-Hill, 2004). Gender constructions play a significant role in the archetypes formed about Indigeneity in

Canadian consciousness (Carter, 2012). For example while colonial images of Indigenous women are often dichotomized between "squaw" and "Indian princess" (Carter, 2012); conversations about the fur trade evoke images of rough and rugged hyper-masculine men (McKegney, 2014; Vibert, 1996). Once again, as demonstrated by Vibert (1996), non-Aboriginal people such as David Thompson were creating identities for Indigenous men through ethnographic observation, as though Aboriginal people didn't know who they were. In her account, Vibert (1996) discusses how legitimized ideals of masculinity were based on British colonial ideas of industriousness: fishing and gathering were seen as lazy activities while the efficiency and scale of the buffalo hunt was seen as very masculine. Ruggedness defined manliness of a certain character; however "gentlemen" were still of a higher class than Métis men for example (Vibert, 1996). All of these narratives serve to complicate issues of identity and identification for Aboriginal peoples within present settler-colonial contexts. Thus, part of decolonization is deconstructing gendered violence, masculinities, and patriarchal hierarchies (Anderson, Innes & Swift, 2012; McKegney, 2014). Other realities, such as the disproportionate poverty, overrepresentation in prisons, and large scale removal of Indigenous children from their homes by social services are all present examples of colonial attempts to dissolve Aboriginal cultures that must be acted against in decolonial journeys (Alfred, 2013; Bastien, 2004; Blackstock & Trocmé, 2005).

It is typically an Indigenous endeavour to use a decolonizing framework for research (Kovach, 2009; Root, 2010). As someone who fluctuates between settler and Aboriginal identities, I feel that a decolonizing framework is an important consideration for this study. Due to complex ancestries, some Métis people can embody both identities

of colonizer and colonized. One's position on the colonized spectrum depends on the emerging individual identifications. My experience is primarily as a settler with small but increasing, connections to my Métis identification.

Most literature on decolonization and resistance has likewise been written about by, and for, Aboriginal people (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Bastien, 2004; Cole, 2002; Iseke-Barnes, 2003; Root, 2010; Simpson, 2004). Emily Root (2010), a settler ally and academic, identifies that decolonization by Indigenous people is likely an effort to reclaim what was taken from them. Similarly Graveline (1998) states that decolonization is a way of healing and empowerment for Indigenous people.

Despite most decolonizing literature emerging from Aboriginal academics, Root (2010) offers ideas of how settlers can employ lessons of Indigenous resistance, decolonization and indigenizing on their journeys. She focuses particularly in outdoor and environmental education: a) spending time with Aboriginal people in an effort to better understand their specific worldviews; b) relationships with non-Aboriginal people also involved in decolonization work and c) time on the land. These suggestions fit well with Richardson's (2004; 2006) recommendations for reclaiming Métis identities stated earlier.

Métis people have had a unique position within the colonial discourse and as more people claim Métis identities there is an increase in resistance to colonialism among Métis peoples (Lawrence, 2004; Richardson, 2006). Métis scholars Adam Gaudry and Robert Hancock (2012) offer academic-based resistance to the colonization of Métis people. As alluded to earlier, identities of Métis peoples are often defined by non-Aboriginal settlers, e.g., Tom Flanagan who asserts that all Métis claims to land and

identity are effectively settled, which, of course they are not (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012). Non-Métis narratives provide an opportunity for Métis people to point out and resist colonial confines then embark on their own journeys. Because Métis life and identities are complex, and because there is relatively little land to claim as their own – until recently with the Manitoba decision by the Supreme Court as well as the eight settlements in Alberta (Bell, 1994; Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada, 2013) – it becomes difficult to reclaim dispossessed land. The Canadian government has denied most claims to land from the beginning of Métis requests (Boyden, 2010; Weinstien, 2007).

Informed by the aforementioned Indigenous scholars and following the suggestions by Gaudry and Hancock (2012), Lowan(-Trudeau) (2011), Richardson (2004; 2006), and Root (2010) I aim to develop a decolonization framework for my study in the following ways. Areas like the Gladstone Valley in Southwestern Alberta provide land for me to connect with. Relationships with Métis people were similarly sought with participants of this study, and there is no shortage of settler interest in decolonizing solidarity work to continue conversations especially since the beginning of the Idle No More movement. Indeed, many of my Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends engage in decolonization work, as well as conversations to create meaning and action from these experiences.

I share with Friedel (2011), Lowan(-Trudeau) (2011), Norris (2011), and Root (2010) a background in outdoor environmental education, a field that has been largely dominated by Eurocentric discourse (Friedel, 2011; Lowan(-Trudeau), 2011; Norris, 2011; Root, 2010). Outdoor education can be subsumed under the larger title of

recreation and leisure, and/or pedagogy (Breunig, 2005), and my experiences in outdoor education have involved participating in and organizing outdoor experiential education (OEE) programs. Mary Breunig, a social justice and experiential education scholar, articulates the intersections of critical pedagogy in OEE contexts (Breunig, 2005). Although OEE can be problematic due to the pervasive Eurocentric ideas played out in programs for youth (Friedel, 2011; Warren, Roberts, Breunig & Alvarez, 2014), some programs (e.g. Ghost river rediscovery in Alberta) engage with both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing to connect youth both culturally and to the land (Lowan(-Trudeau), 2011). This connection can be achieved through shared experience with peers, in culturally relevant ways on traditional Aboriginal territory. One way to achieve this shared connection is through culturally relevant recreation and leisure experiences.

Recreation, Leisure and Identity

Kleiber (1999) defines leisure as "the combination of free time and the expectation of a preferred experience" (p. 3). Neulinger (1974) similarly describes leisure as

> …to be engaged in an activity performed for its own sake, to do something, which gives one pleasure and satisfaction, which involves one to the very core of one's being. To leisure means to be oneself, to express one's talents, ones' capacities, ones' potentials. (p. xi)

An example of leisure identity in an Aboriginal context would be berry-picking: by connecting with land, understanding cultural protocol of harvesting berries and spending time in community with other cultural members one has the potential to deepen cultural identity through leisure (Michell, 2009).

While I disagree that an activity can be only for its own sake or that leisure is necessarily solely for pleasure, I believe that Kleiber and Neulinger offer a starting point for conceptualizing leisure. In my view, it is important to understand the intersection of leisure and self-reflexive personal developmental work, which is often uncomfortable and difficult (hooks, 2000) but still occupies non-work time. For example, leisure identity research has provided some reflections on how adolescent and queer – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) – peoples form their identities (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). However, despite recognizing some groups who struggle with identity – in this case adolescents and those in the LGBT community – significant gaps remain in understanding the leisure habits of other marginalized groups.

Aboriginal people experience related forms of systemic oppression as those in the LGBT community, but based primarily on complexities other than sexual orientation or gender (Driskill, Finley, Gilley & Morgensen, 2011; Smith, 2010). That said, certainly the oppressions of people who are both Indigenous and queer are more pervasive, compounded, and difficult to navigate.

Perhaps this gap in understanding is due to the difficulty of separating leisure from other activities in Aboriginal contexts. In many Aboriginal worldviews, "work, play, leisure, recreation and religion were all interconnected" (Karlis, 2004, p. 46). The idea of intersectionality, developed in feminist discourse, provides a good model for integrating these social positions together. hooks (2000) describes intersections of race, class, sexual orientation, and gender to be inseparable parts of the same conversation. Indeed all aspects in Aboriginal cultures can appear to overlap in contrast to what I perceive as the compartmentalization inherent in Western ways of knowing. These

intersections can be understood within a framework of Indigenous métissage and further informs the theoretical framework for this study by incorporating leisure research concerned with identity formulation of marginalized groups.

It is through leisure experiences that I have come to develop an understanding of my relational existence in the world; for example, introspection during wilderness experiences has prompted a process of self-analysis and identification (Norris, 2011) and indeed visiting and conversing with Métis peoples is a form of leisure. Defining leisure is difficult because its meaning is derived in different contexts. Here I find an interesting parallel between leisure and identification, which is the development of individual meanings that avoid homogenous, concrete definitions. These difficulties are evident in social justice and outdoor education paradigms as well (Warren et al., 2014).

Given the difficulty of defining leisure, I propose a working definition of leisure for my present study: leisure is the pursuit of, or experience with, activities of one's choosing, in solitude or groups, with parameters defined by and/or accepted by participants.

Culture is an important consideration in the study of leisure (Chick, 2009), thus leisure could be incorporated into a study of culture. Given this understanding of leisure, identification, engaging in decolonization, and connecting with ancestry all become both functions and methods of engaging in leisure pursuits. Many people associate their leisure time closely with their identity, in essence creating belonging by engaging in self-chosen activities (Kleiber, 1999). People generally seek a sense of belonging in community while simultaneously seeking independent ideas of identity (Kleiber, 1999). One of the principles of the autoethnographic methodology, discussed further in chapter three, is

comparing and contrasting one's personal narratives with the cultural context in which they are embedded (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). Navigating self in culture is typically a process of some discomfort and takes into account many cultural variables (Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martínez, 2011; Phinney, 2008). How does one develop identity in cultural contexts? How do social oppressions like colonialism impact cultural identification? How does a cultural atmosphere help to create identities or vice versa? How might the environment impact an identification process?

Understanding that events and leisure experiences themselves undergo evolution, parallel processes of navigating identities within leisure experiences can be challenging. In her essay on the evolution of the Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage – a journey to a sacred space on the Northern Alberta prairies that has taken place every summer by Aboriginal and European people alike to celebrate spirituality – Wall (2009) describes the confluence of identity, place, culture, and belonging with leisure tourism. She states, "Aboriginal health is significantly intertwined with maintaining the traditional balance between humans, spiritual aspects of life and contact with nature. Places considered sacred are commonly connected with this process" (p. 295). To create a space where identity work is possible means to fully engage in a process of coming to know one's self, however dynamic that self becomes. Identification is a process open to all people and undertaken in a variety of ways. People may form identities based on, and in contrast to, cultural groups as well as activities they are engaged in (Chick, 2009; Spears, 2011).

Drawing upon the research presented by scholars on the above knowledges about Métis identities and the intersections with theory, leisure, and colonialism lead me to the purpose and paths of inquiry for this present study, which I restate here to reacquaint

readers with the direction of this research.

Purpose and Research Questions Revisited

As a person of Métis ancestry, the purpose of this study is to reflect on my Métis identity through journals, historical documents and conversations.

1. Does exploring my family's historical artifacts and interacting with Métis people, facilitate an understanding of my Aboriginality? If so, how and in what ways?
2. What is my emergent understanding of decolonization and how does it contribute to my conception of my Aboriginality?
3. How might these understandings of Aboriginality, gained through literature and living as a culturally ambivalent Métis person influence my knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about Métis culture and my identity?
4. How can I employ lessons or insights gained through conversations, personal reflections and artifacts to educate and inform other people who are curious about their Métis identities?

Chapter Three: Methods

The Best Laid Plans

At the outset of this project I felt confident in my decolonization processes. Perhaps my overconfidence should have raised red flags because, a decolonization practice is often, inadvertently usurped by a colonial one (Alfred, 2013; Smith, 2010). That is, colonial narratives are re-enforced rather than dismantled.

I had originally developed this research, proposing a four-month site-visit to a Métis community where I would work and build relationships with local Métis peoples. It was my intention to participate in and absorb as much as I could about Métis culture and ways of life during my short stay. I wanted to make up for years of cultural practice I felt I had missed. I planned to collect journal entries and ponderings that I would write during this process as a main source of data collection. I would then interpret this data in reference to how resonant it was with my own experience of being Métis while triangulating historical documents and literature to complement the research. I was aware that I would not be able to explain Métis identity it its entirety and I would have to be very cautious in my interactions with others and how I portrayed those interactions. However, I remained adamant that my plan was centered upon ***my*** *story and there was no concern of speaking for anyone other than myself. Indeed there was no way around interacting with people during this experience so I justified implicating them within the writing as personal references by employing the words of Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) who discussed relational ethics:*

> *Researchers do not exist in isolation. We live connected to social networks that include friends and relatives, partners and children, co-workers and students, and*

we work in universities and research facilities. Consequently, when we conduct and write research, we implicate others in our work (n.p.).

I walked into my supervisor's office moments before my proposal defense, tired but feeling ready to close that chapter and to proceed with collecting data. I sat down to listen to what I had thought was a pre-defense pep talk.

A lead weight implanted itself in my throat when my supervisor informed me that she, and my advisory committee, remained skeptical of the minimal ethical considerations of my work. I had almost no time to digest this information before stepping into a room, where a handful of peers, mentors, and colleagues awaited my presentation. During the defense, the three scholars who form my committee, and whom I respect very much, raised questions of ethical conduct regarding the study ***of****, rather than* ***with*** *Aboriginal peoples. "How will you frame conversations with locals without getting their consent?" "Is this participant observation?" "Why not do interviews?" "If this was your community, or your Grandmother, how would you feel about someone interpreting her words?" Essentially what I had proposed was a cultural ethnography under the guise of an autoethnography and without due ethical process. I was complicit in a re-enactment of colonialism. I stood still beside the podium and felt warming in my cheeks, my breathing became shallow and my hands quivered as I calmly delivered measured responses from the nervous, guilty ember in my sternum. I had worked hard on this, I am a good person, I know how to behave ethically I thought to myself. More exhausted than indignant, I wanted it to be over.*

As I stepped out of the room, I left the committee to discuss the viability of what I had put forward. I felt deflated, I knew the concerns brought to light were important, and

even essential to consider. They had been gentle in coaxing me to explore ideas and processes that were part of honest, ethical research, but my mind and body were ready to collapse. I wanted this project to be good, to be done in a good way. Upon re-entering the room I was greeted kindly and told that I had conditionally passed the proposal defense. The condition was to complete an ethics review application. This would offer an opportunity to clearly articulate the research design and flesh out any inconsistencies between intent and practice. I nodded in agreement, trusting, and reminding myself "research is a process – a ceremony" (Wilson, 2008 p. 69).

I still decided to visit the Métis community and within a few days of my arrival I was hit with the full realization of my misguided colonial intentions, the same realization my committee had suggested I might encounter. I came to a new understanding of the problematic nature of my proposed study. Armed with a newfound starting point I began to put my intention towards a detailed ethics application. The process of writing a Research Ethics Board (REB) application shifted my research significantly. I slowly changed my course and decided to pursue interviews with Métis peoples who may offer some insight into understanding my own story with more clarity. During this shift I adapted the research purpose and questions to better reflect how the study would be carried out while remaining accountable to "all my relations" (Wilson, 2001 p. 177).

In this chapter I outline how the research project was designed from my new starting point. As above, I use italicized font throughout this chapter to identify my own voice when I outline my process. I first discuss qualitative research as a form of inquiry and provide a rationale as to why it best fits my study. I then describe two methodologies that weave (Donald, 2012) together this research endeavor, an Indigenous methodological

framework in the form of Indigenous métissage and an autoethnographic methodology.

The blending of these methodologies is explicated and conceptualized in an effort to convey a holistic understanding of the research design. From there, I outline how the chosen methodologies inform the blend of data collection techniques. This section is interwoven with ethical considerations that are unique to data collection in Indigenous métissage and autoethnography. I then provide information regarding specific interview techniques, how the participants were selected, followed by details related to two supporting methods of data collection; field notes and artifacts. Following that section is a description of data analysis processes and how they connect to the study design. Finally, I explore study limitations, and hesitations.

This chapter explores the use of story in various contexts. Autoethnography can be used to tell stories of the self, which parallels the storytelling culture of many Aboriginal peoples (Ellis, 2004; Kovach, 2009). The main point here is that stories can be used in knowledge formation, interpretation, and translation (Cruikshank, 1998; Ellis, 2004; Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013; Kovach, 2009; Muncey, 2010; Smith, 2012). Indigenous stories, however, must be engaged with in a respectful way and with reciprocity in order to avoid further appropriation of Indigenous cultures (Bastien, 2004; Cruikshank, 1998; Smith, 2012). I hope I have done so here.

Qualitative Research

Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research as studying phenomena to make sense of, interpret, and locate the meaning people bring to their experience by exploring the social contexts of their life-worlds. Similarly, Savin-Baden and Major (2013) describe qualitative research as a way of seeking knowledge about the complexity of human

interaction and understanding. Here, the link between qualitative research and the telling of stories begins to unfold. They suggest qualitative research as an answer to "wicked problems" (p. 5) – problems that do not have a definitive solitary answer but represent the world as the complex "entity" that it is. A qualitative researcher aims to provide an understanding of complex human interactions, not necessarily by answering questions, but by exploring ideas (Patton, 2002). I would also submit that there is complexity beyond human interaction that may be uncovered in natural, spiritual, cultural, and emotional worlds (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009; Wilson, 2001), which may be partially, illuminated by an Indigenous worldview. For example, Aboriginal connection to land is a quintessential part of one's well-being (Alfred, 2013). Many Aboriginal peoples regard nearly everything as living (McNab, 2007). Thus my emerging understandings are relational not only to human contexts but to the interconnection of all beings.

There are a variety of ways to undertake a qualitative study. A methodology is determined partly by the research question themselves (Patton, 2002). It can be overwhelming to consider all the different methodologies within qualitative inquiry. An epistemology, or way of experiencing knowledge, emerges once significant reflection about what is known has taken place (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests employing an ontological stance – "way of experiencing reality" (p. 77) – to inform what methodology is used. Understanding epistemological and ontological points of departure facilitates finding an approach to exploring a given phenomenon (Patton, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Wilson, 2008). I have discussed my connection to Aboriginal epistemologies (if they can be known as such) in the previous chapter. The

next section offers an exploration of specific Indigenous methodologies, which employ Indigenous ways of knowing.

Indigenous Methodologies

There is considerable debate within academia about whether Indigenous methodologies should be included under qualitative inquiry at all because of the unique worldviews of Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples (Bastien, 2004; Smith, 2012). Kovach (2009) recognizes the difficulty of incorporating Indigenous epistemologies and Western ways of knowing by providing the example of language, stating, "I am left contemplating how difficult it must have been for Indigenous people and first visitors to understand one another given each group's distinctive language and culture" (p. 24). I echo Kovach who said Indigenous peoples are largely misunderstood by settlers in North America. This distance between groups has found its way into settler institutions such as universities (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous methodologies are not only subjugated in the academy but are often seen as only relevant to studies of Indigenous peoples rather than studies by or for Indigenous peoples (Haig-Brown, 2008; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Smith (2012) states that there is a breadth of knowledge within the worldviews of Indigenous peoples, which is not given equal credibility in the academy. She further argues that Indigenous peoples will have unique processes for research that are unavailable to Western academics but offer invaluable richness. For example, a holistic, spiritual, and emotional connection to land offers a relational approach to research (Wilson, 2008) not normally used in the tradition of positivist thought. This relational starting point is in contrast to traditional colonial paradigms that objectified plants, animals, and people in the "new world" (Smith, 2012).

Indigenous epistemologies, then, are valuable to approaching research especially, but not solely, with Aboriginal peoples.

Many Indigenous peoples have an adverse relationship with research, having traditionally been subjects of inquiry – often of grotesque and atrocious experimentation – rather than being part of knowledge production (Bastien, 2004; Kovach, 2009; Matsinhe, 2007; Smith, 2012). It thus becomes crucial for Aboriginal and Indigenous researchers to honour their traditions, families, and communities while performing the delicate task of reclaiming research as positive action (Wilson, 2008). Moreover, Smith (2012) states that Indigenous researchers may experience difficulties in their own communities due to their close relationship to the academy, which can alienate them from their home communities. Aboriginal researchers and researchers studying within Aboriginal communities are being called upon to employ Indigenous methodologies in their studies (Blodgett, Schinke, Smith, Peltier & Pheasant, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Where resonant pathways of inquiry do not exist, Aboriginal scholars should employ new and creative methods of incorporating an Indigenous worldview into their research (Turner, 2010; Wilson, 2001). This creative process allows for the evolution of, and breadth in, Indigenous methodologies. For example, the unique Métis storytelling approach to research employed by Turner (2010) in her dissertation or Wilson's (2008) use of ceremony to explain the research processes, articulate new ways of coming to know or to explore. Wilson's ceremonial approach to research in particular offered me a new spiritual understanding of a process of research.

Non-Aboriginal people wishing to study particular Aboriginal groups or ways of being are encouraged to approach research as a collaborative, open hearted, and

community-based process (Blodgett et al. 2011; Cole, 2002; Kovach, 2009; Root, 2010). To engage in research with Aboriginal peoples, one must be culturally aware of what it is they are asking for, as well as how to give back to the community with whom one is becoming involved. Reciprocity is of high value in Aboriginal communities (TCPS 2, 2010; Dennis, 2012; Smith, 2012). If non-Indigenous or non-Aboriginal researchers are to engage in those communities, they must go beyond the ethical considerations put forth by their respective institutions and offer a lasting gifts that are of use to the communit(ies) or contexts where they do research (Smith, 2012) (e.g. returning to the community to nurture lasting relationships). Too often the benefit of research and learning goes to the already privileged researcher (Himley, 2004). Ethical considerations of honouring the people in the study are critical for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

In order to honour my ancestors, and to better understand my own Métisness, I have chosen to undertake an Indigenous methodological design. Because of my Eurocentric upbringing I do not carry into research an explicit tribal knowledge from which to work (Kovach, 2009). I also, do not have a tribe, per say. As previously discussed, the identification of a Métis person is complex and does not necessarily adhere to traditional Indigenous (or Western) frameworks. Indeed, any residual Aboriginal knowledge I may have is tacit, embodied or wrapped in blood memory (i.e. memory carried in bloodlines throughout the generations, without explicit or tangible learning taking place) (Iseke-Barnes, 2003).

Blood memory is one example of the esoteric knowledge of Indigenous people described by Matsinhe (2007), which has largely been avoided by academic inquiry

(Haig-Brown, 2008). Blood memory, however, is a contested term because it evokes colonial narratives of cultural authenticity measured by blood quantum (Allen, 1999; Vowel, 2011). Although, I have discussed that Métis identities are culturally and historically established rather than by blood percentages (Andersen, 2014), I also hold reservations about alluding to blood purity in describing this type of knowledge. Instead, McNab (2007) uses the terminology of spirit memory, which he describes as "…a very powerful thing, invoking the spirits of one's ancestors who are always with you along your long journey" (p. 34). Spirit memory resonates more fully with me because it includes the spirits of all my ancestors, not only my Aboriginal ones, thus reminiscent of an increasingly complex métissage.

An Elder once told me that memories exist in the land, so they are not forgotten, only buried. Donald (2012) helps frame this idea using the metaphor of pentimento, a painting overtop an existing one. All stories still exist although one is primarily seen, and the others must be uncovered by peeling back the layers and examining the interactions of the underlying paintings (p. 544). Continuity of ancestral knowledge and being closely related to all beings are examples of Indigenous knowledges (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers & Leggo, 2009; Wilson, 2001) that resonate with me. Despite separations between Indigenous and qualitative paradigms, there exists some overlap between these methodologies (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous methodologies are separate ways of knowing but intersect with certain Western academic settings (Kovach, 2009). The interplay of methodologies here is also congruent with Indigenous métissage (Donald, 2012; Lowan(-Trudeau), 2011; 2012), combining Aboriginal with Eurocentric methods, and carefully weaving each strand

together. Donald (2012) further describes Indigenous métissage as a transcendent movement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous understandings. By amalgamating this transcendence, adding a bricolage, created by the weaving of teachings and utilizing the metaphor of pentimento, the complexity of métissage offers depth in a new way of coming to know (Donald, 2012; Lowan-Trudeau, 2012). I use this abstract and complex metaphor because it speaks to the difficulty of navigating many resources, teachings and stories that have contributed to this research endeavour. Kovach (2009) identifies autoethnography as one example of how Indigenous ways of knowing can be woven – creating a bricolage – with Western qualitative traditions.

Autoethnography

Emerging from ethnography – the study of culture – autoethnography was initially developed to explore one's own cultural group (Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013). As qualitative inquiry moved away from claims of objectivity, autoethnographic writers began to turn inward and focus on a reflexive, introspective research practice (Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013). Ellis (2004) suggests that autoethnographic research can take on many forms to explore narratives such as novels, art, performance, and music. She also exemplified the ability of autoethnography to employ a narrative style by creating a novel on the autoethnographic methodology entitled *The Ethnographic I*.

Inherent in Indigenous cultures, are teachings built around storytelling; here, I found the most appropriate intersection of my chosen methodologies. I can think of no more relevant manner to explore a process of self-identification than in the storytelling traditions of Métis peoples (Richardson, 2004; Turner, 2010). To begin telling my story of coming to know my Métis self, I employ autoethnographic guidance with the

theoretical frame of Indigenous métissage.

Autoethnography as a methodology allows researchers to explore their sense of self in relation to their own culture in narratives; the primary focus of inquiry is within the researcher himself or herself (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Additionally, by interacting and existing in relationships with other people, and within broader systemic and discursive narratives autoethnographers situate their experience of "self" within the tensions of dynamic cultural experiences (Denshire, 2014; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). My autoethnographic process offers me the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be Métis and explore my ambivalent identifications with Métisness. This methodology also reflects my decision to try to avoid reenacting "Western discourses of the Other" (Smith, 2012, p. 1). My relationships with Aboriginal people have created space to challenge the racist assumptions that have been entrenched in my experiences. Racist narratives are a piece of my upbringing that I am not proud of but are important to deconstruct. All of my experiences, and relational knowledge accompanied me into this research endeavour.

Muncey (2010) suggests that validity in autoethnographic research is difficult to navigate due to the personal nature of stories and validity is better based on resonance with the reader. My hope is that this research may provide people of Métis ancestry an opportunity to connect with and/or consider their Aboriginal history through my story. I also hope that the literature and ideas presented here will offer some insight into Aboriginal ways of knowing for non-Aboriginal people. True to Métis form, Métis academics reading this work and wishing to use a similar praxis for reference may – or may not – employ the same measures I did during research (Turner, 2010). Just as I have

departed from Richardson (2004), Short (2011), and Turner's (2010) theses I would suspect readers and prospective researchers will undertake their own processes. That being said, Richardson, Short, and Turner provided me with the confidence to write my story simply by having written before me. Smith (2012) describes this "writing back" (p. 8) – as a form of Indigenous resistance. Reflexivity provides strength to the research (Muncey, 2010) however there are additional considerations for validity that are unique to autoethnographic inquiry. Those will be discussed further in the limitations section of this chapter.

Data Collection and Ethical Concerns

Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) describe the difficulty in establishing criteria for autoethnographic data collection; due to the exploratory nature of the methodology, autoethnographic research can feel vague. They go on to describe how unsettling it can be for novice researchers. Because the focus of inquiry is the experience of the researcher, ambiguity exists about the validity of data, which normally takes the form of self-reflexive journal entries (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). Similarly, Indigenous research methodologies do not offer hard and fast rules for engaging in the collection of data, instead focusing on ethical considerations and maintaining a critical, reciprocal sensibility when walking a research path (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Both methodologies offer some common types of data collection. For the purposes of my study and in light of my research questions, I opted to employ reflexive interviews, field notes, and artifacts (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Muncey, 2010). This process of collecting multiple data sources generated depth in my understanding as well as provided a level of accountability through data triangulation,

– this will be explicated later in this chapter. These multiple sources of data offered me opportunities to explore my identification processes as a Métis person through both relationships and self-reflexivity.

Reflexive, dyadic interviews and sampling.

Within the scope of autoethnography, it is acceptable to employ the use of interviews to supplement one's knowledge of self (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Can anyone speak solely for oneself without mentioning others? The idea of relational ethics suggests that we are always implicating others when speaking about ourselves and indeed autoethnographers can be more ethically responsible by recognizing their relational knowledges (Denshire, 2014; Ellis, 2007; Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Denshire (2014) states that interviewing in autoethnography can bring out subjugated knowledges through centering voices that are interlaid with the author's own voice.

That said, is it not also problematic to speak on behalf of others, particularly with peoples who've had their identities so often appropriated? Alcoff (2009) discussed a feminist view of this idea in stating "speaking for others… is arrogant, vain, unethical and politically illegitimate" (p. 117). She describes the discursive problem of finding a position from which to speak that neither appropriates voices nor escapes accountability of what is spoken about by narrowing ones location. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) recommend reflexive, dyadic interviews in which the participants' story is the focus but is simultaneously supplemented with the voice, emotions and inquiries of the interviewer.

Kovach (2009) argues "the term interview does not capture the full essence of this approach. For this was very much a combination of reflection, story and dialogue" (p. 51). Thus, in describing my own process, I use the terminology of conversation to better

reflect the relational engagements I sought out during the research. These conversations compliment Alcoff's (2009) suggestions of listening, identifying position, addressing feedback and remaining accountable to what is spoken.

Pearce (2010) explains the fine balance of conducting interviews on emotionally sensitive topics commonly found in autoethnographic research. During my conversations of identities with participants, emotions sometimes became overwhelming; care had to be taken for both the participant and myself to honour our emotions by checking in with each other and taking breaks where necessary. Although dyadic interviews are sometimes posited as interviews with two participants (Morgan, Ataie, Carder & Hoffman, 2013), in this case I used dyadic conversations to position the participant and I in relationship to each other (Denshire, 2014; Wilson, 2001; 2008). For example, during conversations with participants I discussed how we had come to know each other. I asked them about their family and told them of mine. I would explain my identification process so participants would have an idea of where I was on my journey. My vulnerability helped to position me as a curious learner. I also simultaneously reflected on questions and responses of the participants during our time together which Denshire (2014) calls a "layered account" (p. 843). For instance I would listen to participants' responses and then offer my interpretation through my own story to see if I had understood them correctly. This reflective exchange of stories was also a part of initial interpretive (or analysis) efforts to make sense of what I was hearing in real time (Kovach, 2009).

In my experience, relationships are built by creating time and space to speak and listen to people. Conversations and stories are common forms of knowledge interpretation and dissemination in Aboriginal cultures (Cruikshank, 1998; Hart, 2010).

Approaching an Elder for such a conversation requires a high level of cultural awareness and often offerings of reciprocity in exchange for stories (Dennis, 2012). I have engaged in cultural awareness training led by members of Aboriginal communities in an effort to learn Métis protocols, stories and traditions, thereby creating an understanding of appropriate cultural exchanges (i.e. what can I offer in reciprocity toward such rich insight into cultural knowledges). In an effort to avoid positioning myself only as a researcher (Heshusius, 1994), I listened attentively during conversations, created dialogue (Kovach, 2009) and actively avoided assumptions regarding Métis culture. Specifically, I asked clarification questions regularly on ideas that I didn't understand rather than assuming to know their intention. Thus, conversations tended to be organic in the style recommended by Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008), emulating Aboriginal teachings.

I selected participants using a purposive sampling technique. Mammen & Sano (2012) recommend purposive sampling to locate "difficult to find" participants. I wanted to speak to participants who self-identified as Métis, were engaged somehow in the process of understanding their Métis identit(ies) and who were older than 25 years of age. The age requirement was in place to focus on people who would have adequate time to contemplate their individual identities; as Phinney (2008) suggests "…emerging adulthood may be extended for members of ethnic minority groups….The need to explore the implications of their group membership may extend the identity exploration period throughout the 20s and *often beyond* [emphasis added]*"* (p. 48). No other demographics were specified however the pre-requisites narrowed the field of potential participants significantly. I was able to locate four acquaintances as participants who met the given criteria. Specifically I knew three of the participants through work experiences and had

previously spoken with them about Métis identity before this project. The fourth participant had written a book about her Métis identity and upbringing; she was a friend of my Grandmother and I had received a signed copy of this book many years before. Kovach (2009) maintains that it is acceptable in Indigenous research to have a "pre-existing and ongoing relationship" (p. 51) with participants. The fourth participant was chosen initially with insights from my committee members. I also wanted to keep participant numbers low to prioritize my own voice staying consistent with the autoethnographic process (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011) and to focus on depth over breadth (Kovach, 2009).

All participants identify as female and range from 26 years old into their mid 70's creating a valuable breadth in life experience despite being a small sample. Participants had the option to choose a pseudonym or to attach their own name to their story. This approach was chosen to avoid the disassociation between a person and their stories and to encourage participation and promote agency of the participants as recommended by Wilson (2008). When considering ethical concerns I wanted to maintain what Denshire (2014) and Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) refer to as relational ethics.

As described above, relational ethics take into account how, as researchers, we implicate others in our work. Relational accountability however, is more encompassing for

> As a researcher you are answering to *all your relations* [emphasis in original] when doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling relationships with the world around you… when I am gaining knowledge, I am

> not just gaining in some abstract pursuit, I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfill my end of the research relationship… being accountable to *all my relations* [emphasis in original] (Wilson, 2001, p. 177)

Blodgett et al. (2011) set a framework for including participants in the process as co-researchers especially when they are interested and engaged in the research. Participants were asked to read their transcript for verification, once each transcript was interpreted into a story it was once again sent to participants for clarification. This verification process draws on the methods in the praxis of Aboriginal research as outlined by Blogdett et al. (2011). This process is explained further in the analysis, interpretation, and vignette sections of this chapter respectively.

Field notes.

I wrote personal reflections in the form of field notes (journal entries) intermittently throughout the entire research process in order to capture the emotional, spiritual, and philosophical musings relevant to my Métis self. These journal entries offer an exploration of reflective knowledge that proved useful in explicitly articulating my thought processes. I also engaged in self-reflexive analysis of my experiences. Journal writing resonates with my learning style, which methodologically parallels the study design and its use of narrative. This data collection method is also consistent with Chang's (2013) and Anderson and Glass-Coffin's (2013) recommendations for autoethnographic data collection. I wrote field notes on or about any relationships, with particular place, participants or myself as well as feelings, and musings that emerged during my data collection period. These field notes were written once per week on average and ranged from one to two handwritten pages. I also utilized older personal

journals from before this study's data collection period to assist me personally in recalling events and feelings I associated with an identification process.

Autoethnography is a method that involves organic, emergent fluid stories that collect in the experience of the researcher (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). Muncey (2010), and Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) described writing autoethnography as messy, and vulnerable. For me this process was emergent and felt messy because of the uncertainty about exposing myself through written word. In essence, I was uncertain how to portray myself in text in order to be my most vulnerable and honest. As Kidd and Finlayson (2009) suggest "Mess is, therefore, an essential element to retain in the stories if their interpretation is to be authentic" (p. 990).

Artifacts.

Another method of data collection consisted of collecting artifacts. "Artifacts are imbued with meaning when human hands craft them, but also when human beings conceptualize them as *storied* [emphasis in original] aspects of their world." (Donald, 2012 p. 542)

I read historical writings (i.e. personal documents) passed down from my Grandmother, including: William Gladstone's submissions to the Pincher Creek Echo newspaper (Historic Trails Society of Alberta, 1985), as well as the documents that my Uncle, Aunt, Francis Riviere and I collected to submit our membership applications to the Métis Nation of Alberta. These documents were used to supplement my stories of self alongside relevant research literature during the interpretation phase of the study. I used these documents as a method of data triangulation by combining my interpretation of these with stories of my relatives which were further complemented by historical

narratives found in the literature. These documents include scrips given to my ancestors (Appendix 5 and 6), letters to the government, a family tree and other Métis Nation of Alberta applications from family members.

Data Analysis and/or Interpretation

Similar to data collection in autoethnography, there was no cohesive or definitive method for analyzing the conversations, field notes, and artifacts assembled during my research (Chang, 2013; Muncey, 2010). Some autoethnographers will determine meaning through an intuitive process and others adopt a more analytical approach (Chang, 2013). Once again, however, there are few explicit recommendations to create meaning from the data in either methodology (Chang, 2013; Kovach, 2009). I developed meaning while engaging in conversations with Métis people, and interrogating my reflective journals to create narratives of both participants and my own experiences. My process was as follows.

I correctly anticipated the period of data collection would be emotionally exhaustive given the depth of the stories and the geographic distances crossed to facilitate conversations. This resulted in a feeling of vulnerability resonant with what Ellis (2004) describes as emotional depictions of autoethnographic data. As a result of these emotions, I intended to follow this period of data collection with a time for incubation. I wanted to allow time for rumination and reflection. This period was meant to last from one to four months. During this time, I would not revisit the data collected but rather give myself time to recover from the research process. By doing so, it was my hope to solidify and make sense of my experience. After this incubation period, I would return to the data and begin the interpretation process.

In actuality, there was a shift in the incubation period created by a division between the second and final two reflective conversations. The first two conversations took place in person, in Alberta and were recorded at a location specified by the participant. Upon my return to my home University I transcribed them. As I transcribed, I noticed some significant holes in the questioning. The next two conversations took place approximately one month and six weeks after the second respectively. This timeframe created space for a modified incubation period where I ruminated on the depth of the conversations. Where had I gone wrong? What could be improved? I re-evaluated the questioning process in order to elucidate what I was looking for and how to achieve it. The answer was clear: I must listen – really listen (Alcoff, 2009; Kovach, 2009). I found it difficult to avoid excitement during the conversations and to avoid telling my own story. I decided to keep the questions the same while focusing on intentional prompts that would engender rich stories from the participants themselves. For example, I made an intentional effort not to interrupt in any way until the speaker had finished; I then spent time thinking about what they said to form an appropriate response rather than moving on to another question too quickly. My readjustment produced different but equally beautiful narratives rounding out a breadth of experience that spoke to me in important ways. I transcribed the two final conversations before re-immersing myself in literature about how to make sense of it all.

Wilson (2008) suggests that knowledge must be felt and meaning must be created in ways that make sense to the people involved in the research through relationships. Kovach (2009) echoes Wilson when she states that Western epistemologies would have researchers break down the data into manageable parts during analysis. This breaking

down of data into separate themes disrupts Indigenous worldviews by severing integral connections in our stories thus dismantling relational knowledges. Data in Aboriginal research, then, must be analyzed as a set of relationships. Donald (2012); Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) and Wilson (2001; 2008) all speak about relational accountability in research praxis.

If analysis is normally undertaken to first break apart data, then reorganize it to be viewed in a different light (Kovach, 2009) I would submit that analysis does not adequately represent the framing needed for this particular study due to its separating nature rather than a relational process. I wondered if there was another way? I chose to keep the stories whole as best as I could and find ways to make sense of them by maintaining the words of participants where possible and member checking for resonance (Blogdett, 2011; Kidd & Finlayson, 2009); this process is outlined later in this chapter. In part, I mimicked autoethnographic scholars' Kidd and Finlayson's (2009) approach which was resonant with my process. They recommend a renaming of the process from analysis to "interpretation" stating, "It helps me to be clear that what I am doing is interpreting meaning from the stories, from my own place in the world. 'Analysis' feels like a distanced position, and it doesn't fit well with my approach." (p. 986).

Indeed the relationships that I've created (and continue to create) with participants have been invaluable to my own identification processes and the processes by which I understand those relationships as necessarily personal. For example, the clarifications I gleaned from conversing with Frances about my own family illuminated untold pieces of my own story. Additionally, I have continued to spend time with Frances whenever I return home and I make consistent efforts to speak with other participants on the

telephone and in person. I am in regular contact with three of the four participants. Experiences shared between participants and me represent a co-constructed effort to continue our relationships. As stated earlier, I asked participants if they would be willing to read their transcript for textual validity and to input any changes they may see fit. All but one participant sent me feedback on their transcript and made minor corrections. By having participants engage in this process, I modified a form of data triangulation (Blogdett et al. 2011; Spalding & Phillips, 2007) to ensure accuracy and resonance with members of the community. As Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) suggest

> On many occasions [relational concern] obligates autoethnographers to show their work to others implicated in or by their texts, allowing these others to respond, and/or acknowledging how these others feel about what is being written about them and allowing them to talk back to how they have been represented in the text (p. 9)

Next I explain how I maintained the integrity of the participant's stories while elucidating my own meaning through the use of vignettes.

Vignettes.

I present the individual stories of participants, with the land, and within the contexts of our conversation in the next chapters. This building of narratives blends autoethnographic storytelling into an Aboriginal epistemology by employing storytelling traditions in autoethnography while incorporating ethics and practices from Indigenous methodologies (Ellis, 2004; Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013; Kovach, 2009).

These narratives are articulated in the form of vignettes (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). According to Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, vignettes are used to describe

a particular situation, involving a few characters. Ely, Vinz, Downing and Anzul (1997) provide a typology of different vignettes, which was later modified by Spalding and Phillips (2007) and Blodgett et al. (2011). Vignettes can take the form of a portrait, snapshot or composite (Blodgett et al., 2011; Ely et al. 1997; Spalding & Phillips, 2007).

Portraits use, as closely as possible, the words of participants. Snapshots are used to describe a particular situation and often include a more interpretive researcher voice. Composite vignettes amalgamate stories across a data set to make sense of a particular theme. These small narratives also reflect the storytelling methods used to create meaning in Aboriginal cultures presented by Cruikshank (1998), King (2003), Kovach (2009), and Wilson, (2008). In this case, participants described their experiences and significant moments with me during conversations as well as their thoughts and experiences about being Métis. In my analysis I make use of portraits in a similar style to Blogdett et al. (2011), Kovach (2009) and Lowan(-Trudeau) (2011) where the voice of the participant remains largely intact.

I began this process of writing vignettes during transcription, where I maintained the participants' voice by transcribing the recordings verbatim. Afterward, in order to make sense of the data and provide a cleaner portrait, I removed filler words such as: um, uh, and, like etc. I also removed repetitions and/or stuttering for clarity. While I recognize that these words may have offered some meaning to the participant I have actively avoided a textual analysis of the conversations. I listened to the audio recordings and read the transcript to create a clean version of the transcript. From here, I began creating the vignettes.

The writing of vignettes and maintaining voice was significantly more difficult

than I had first imagined. In my first attempt at creating these vignettes in an effort to centre the voice of each participant, I attempted to create a dialogue between participants and myself using their exact words and my interpretations. This initial effort was in vain because while I could maintain an individual's voice, the dialogue was far too long and difficult to read. My second attempt was to begin with the transcripts and systematically remove any pieces of a transcript that were opinion-based. I was focused only on each participant's story rather than her individual interpretations. This attempt also did not feel right to me. Despite getting a much shorter narrative, the vignettes were still well over ten pages long. These vignettes also felt very much like a transcript and read as awkward prose. I felt profoundly guilty altering any words, even for tense agreement, lest the meaning be changed too significantly from each individual's intent. The stories did not live up to the depictions of complex ideas articulated by each participant. How could I maintain the voice in a succinct and articulate manner that matched the cadence of the rest of the research writing?

I abandoned all previous attempts and began anew. For my third attempt I revisited the literature from Denshire (2014) who suggested that the creating of vignettes necessarily involved a process of interpretation. By finding the essences of the participants' transcripts that resonated most deeply with me I was already engaged in an analytical and interpretive process. Thus, changing words became less of a stress especially if I were to follow Blogdett et al.'s (2011) recommendations for creating vignettes. Rather than subtracting all of the opinions from the transcript, they advise to highlight those pieces of a story that are most significant, moving, and resonant. Those pieces of the conversation are then transferred to a new document and filled in with

coherent language, to connect participant ideas and to build a narrative. Afterward, the narrative is compared with the transcript to pick up on any missing ideas, and then sent to participants for validation. I felt great relief alongside satisfaction of due ethical process to have settled on a method where I could both interpret the conversations while maintaining the voice of participants.

Although sending data back to participants twice for confirmation is more familiar in participatory action research, Blodgett et al. (2011), Lowan(-Trudeau) (2011), Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008) encourage continued relationship with participants in Aboriginal research. Thus, once I distilled and worked through the transcripts to develop a story, I sent each participant her vignette so she had an opportunity to make any corrections. I informed participants during our conversations that both the transcript and the vignette would be sent to them, providing them the option of commenting on it or not. Blogdett et al. (2011) explains a process whereby participants decide not to read a story because they had a relationship with the researcher and trusted their process. Nevertheless it was very important to me to send the vignettes to the participants. Two participants responded with minor clarifications that complemented their story which were used as the final vignettes in this thesis. One other two participants stated they were satisfied and trusted that I had engaged respectfully in this processs. The purpose of these four vignettes is to introduce the participants and provide context for my own story following Kovach's (2009) example.

Once the participants' vignettes were written and sent, I created my own narrative portrait, by relying on my journals familial artifacts and the information gathered from conversations with participants. My personal experiences, written in story form

recommended by Kovach (2009) explicate and articulate my own voice and processes of how I understand my complicated identities.

To begin I followed the cadence of participant vignettes by writing my story based loosely on the interview guide I had used in our conversations. I used this method to create an outline for my narrative that would be consistent with those of the participants. I began by introducing myself and telling the story of my family as I remember it moving through generations into the present and telling how I have come to understand my identity through this research process.

Once the skeleton of my story was created, I used a more inductive approach to fill in the missing pieces. Inductive processes can be described as those which emerge from the data as the researcher engages in data analysis or interpretation (Kovach, 2009; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The inductive process was done in three sections: a) interpreting secondary data; b) re-reading participant transcripts to facilitate memories; and finally c) adding relevant literature and quotes from participants.

I thus utilized my journals and family artifacts to complement pieces of my initial narrative in an effort to triangulate data and add to the reliability of the story. My intent was to highlight how "stories [in this case vignettes] are articulated through all aspects of autoethnographic research as a starting point, as data, as a tool for interpretation, and a method of dissemination" (Ellis, 2004; Kidd & Finlayson, 2009 p. 984).

I then added to my story by re-reading conversations with participants and created resonant additions to the narrative consistent with Ellis' (2007) description of relational ethics and Kovach's (2009) recommendations of highly subjective autoethnographic interpretation. As I read each transcript, additional memories of my own stories emerged

– stories of my childhood and of my family – all surrounding my process of identification as a Métis person. I began writing these musings in the margins of the transcripts then transferred them into the body of my vignette where they fit chronologically. By adding these responses, which contained theoretical ponderings and personal stories about Métis identity, I was able to give more detail to my recollection. This stage helped to round out the story.

I simultaneously added quotes from participants into my vignette where parallels in our stories strengthened the narrative, thus creating a métissage between a portrait and composite vignette (Blogdett, et al., 2011; Ely et al, 1997; Spalding & Phillips, 2007). Finally, I incorporated literature references where my ideas had been influenced by scholars. This milieu of influence from artifacts, journals, participants and literature further demonstrated the amalgamation of methodological influence through the research.

I chose participant quotes while working through each transcription and highlighting pieces that resonated with me (Kovach, 2009), those that evoked emotion and that articulated my feelings or experiences so poignantly that others' words were more useful than my own. These quotations speak to the intersections of stories and further replicate the Indigenous métissage framework of this study by moving within and throughout different methodological ways of knowing (i.e. Western and Indigenous traditions) (Kovach, 2009). In this way, I began to make sense of my own story in relation to other Métis stories that came up during the research process.

Participant conversations were read in chronological order (Sandelowski, 1998) and one-by-one to match the study design. Because I had come to this research with a given set of assumptions, I was challenged by the literature review to expand those

beliefs even before data collection began. During data collection each conversation allowed reflection and expansion of these teachings. Similarly, during the interpretive steps outlined above I continued to critically engage with new understandings through stories. Thus, I chose to work through each conversation as its own story in succession whilst connecting it to my emerging understandings. My story, which follows in the fifth chapter, was systematically written in this manner.

As I continue to sit with Aboriginal peoples I hope to understand my Métisness in some fashion. This is not, however, the beginning of my story I have been led here by my family and my ancestors who have provided guidance and literature on my family. I am very fortunate to have come to know about my Métis heritage in this way, not all Métis people have the same opportunities.

Limitations

My story is emerging and limited to my understandings of culture that I have experienced thus far. My position as a male who has grown up primarily in settler communities offers an important, albeit limited, perspective on Métis cultures. I am cognizant that I must tread lightly and intentionally on this terrain. Turner's (2010) first language was Cree; she grew up in a Métis community. Richardson (2004) met with a variety of Métis participants during her research, ranging from people who had recently discovered their Aboriginal heritage to Cree-speaking people grounded in their Aboriginal cultures. Similarly, Culjak (2001) reviews the autoethnographies of three Métis women who have vastly different stories. These stories all intersect and create threads to weave together in the fabric of Métis identity. Anderson (2000) wrote "For many of us, part of being Native is feeling like we aren't!" (p. 27). Indeed, Métis

identities encompass a large cultural and geographic area; care must be taken to confront ideas that serve to perpetuate Western compartmentalizing of culture (Andersen, 2014; Cole, 2002). Many Métis people – especially women – assisted European explorers to live in communion with the land, teaching them how to survive the brutal winter and conditions of the land prior to colonization (Andersen, 2014; MacDougall, 2006; Wookey, 2011). Vibrancy is a characteristic of the Aboriginal and Métis people that I know. It is this spirit that I aim to connect with by speaking with Métis people. Here, I tell stories of my experiences as a Métis person with much to learn about my culture. By weaving these stories together with decolonizing narratives, my own colonized experiences and all the intersections of my identity, I hope to create a thread in the larger métissage of Métis identities. There is a distinct possibility that I have missed something, that my colonial mind inadvertently re-enacted oppressions that have been taught to me. Alfred (2013) warns against such a process of re-enacting colonial oppression, that it must be carefully deconstructed and monitored.

Hesitations.

The literature produced by Métis and Aboriginal scholars indicates not all Aboriginal peoples feel vindicated in their identities; for example, Mackinnon (2012) presents Marie Rose Delorme Smith as a woman who experienced ambivalence about her identity as a Métis woman. I feel that I have been intuitively led to explore this part of myself. A young Cree woman that I knew once told me how important it was, no matter how small the connection, to learn about my Aboriginal culture. Did this blind me? Was I so immersed in the idea of being Métis that I ignored any evidence to the contrary? How did I navigate feelings of inconsistency and contradiction? Chang (2013) and Ellis (2004)

suggest that these difficulties are part of self-reflexivity; each researcher must confront them individually and with honesty. This process of constant, self-critical thinking is perhaps the most difficult piece of autoethnography for me. I actively focused intention on bringing awareness to my biases during research; however, I recognize that there will be tacit bias remaining in this writing. By reviewing literature and comparing my reflections with similar works (Short, 2011; Turner 2010), I hope I have confronted and managed these biases adequately.

Furthermore, great care has been taken in the crafting of these stories, not just within the research but also from the participants themselves. By checking in with participants, engaging them in the research process and fostering continued relationships I have created a level of relational accountability, which guides my research and my ethical praxis. Each participant compassionately offered her story in an effort to help me form some sense of identity. It is not lost on me that I have left with more questions than answers. These gifts of knowledge only serve to solidify the generosity of the gift of story for I will continue to carry these stories forward beyond this research. I am deeply indebted to these four women for offering me such gifts; I hope I have done them some justice. What follows, in sequential order, are the stories of four strong Métis women and then my own story for readers to interpret through their own experience (Kovach, 2009).

Chapter Four: Métis Stories From My Relations

In order to glean knowledge about Aboriginal ways of knowing and to know myself as a Métis person I have spoken to many Aboriginal peoples within and outside of this project. Each conversation, each story has been filtered through my own experiences to make sense of the lessons and I have attempted to use the knowledge to inspire action.

The following four vignettes reflect the same processes of listening, reflecting and engaging that I have come to understand as my personal epistemological practice. These vignettes are based on participants' own words, and written in first person to present the essence of each participant's narrative as interpreted through my own understanding. Each vignette has a unique character that reflects the emotional cadence of the conversation held with each individual. This chapter introduces each participant in chronological order to provide context for the knowledges I gained through this research process which are presented in chapter 5.

Kayla Hannan

My name is Kayla Michelle Hannan. I have my maternal grandfather's last name because my mother never married. I grew up in Toronto but spent part of my childhood in Tiny Township near Penetanguishene on the Georgian Bay. I'd always loved it there and in a lot of ways I grew up there as well. Because I was from the city, it was one of the experiences as a kid that made me really feel connected to nature. Both my mother and father had relatives there, so we would get to visit regularly growing up.

My paternal grandfather still lives in Tiny. Initially it seemed like a coincidence to me that both sides of my family ended up in Penetang because of their different histories. I'm not as familiar with the story on my dad's side but I've always wondered what

brought them there. Most of my mom's relatives were French, we have many ancestors who came from France in the early days of Canada. I think I feel most connected to Penetang through my mom's line but only through the stories that I have heard. When I was in elementary school, I heard offhand that my mother's family had Aboriginal ancestry mixed in with the French. I didn't think much of it at the time but I remember a turning point in my mid teens where I started to ask questions and become interested in my lineage. I wasn't sure where specifically in the region of Ontario my family might have been from but I was increasingly curious about what had taken place. My mom's parents died when she was young. Her knowledge keepers had already passed away by the time she was seventeen, so she never had anyone to answer questions about her ancestors.

Because of this gap in my knowledge, there were a ton of stopping points when I was trying to figure out our ancestry. However, a cousin of my mothers had taken it upon himself to do a lot of research into our family origins. He realized not only that we were Aboriginal but he kept hearing Métis. He put a ton of work and time into his research and was able to gain membership to the Métis nation of Ontario for himself and his children. After he got his membership, my mother and I began to identify as Métis more because we had the power of that information. I think that's when I sort of got my feet on the ground more in terms of associating with a Métis identity. As the information became clearer and more pieces were added to it I think people in my family started to become a little clearer about the experiences of their ancestors and that led to aligning more with a Métis identity.

One of the earliest ancestors that we can trace back to is a man named Louis

Chevrette; he came from France and settled in Quebec. He had a son named Louis as well who was a voyageur in the Northwest company. Louis Jr. traded all throughout New France and elsewhere in Canada. He was one of the people relocated to Drummond Island after the war of 1812. The history of Drummond Island is very interesting; there were large groups of people on that island who lived differently than the First Nations or settlers in that area. Previously many of these people had lived on Mackinac Island which is right beside Drummond Island. The British Army took Mackinac as a Fort in the war. During the fighting the British had to give up Mackinac so they moved to Drummond Island where the son of Louis Chevrette may have taken a wife. Drummond Island was a really unique place because diverse groups of people were living all alongside one another in a really unique way. After the war, Drummond Island became part of the United States based on the treaty of Ghent. There must have been an exodus to Canada and my family ended up in Penetang after the move, specifically they landed in the area of Tiny Township or Simcoe county. That's where Louis Chevrette Jr. ended up dying. It's an amazing feeling to be able to close my eyes and picture those people there in the past and the roles they must have played in history. However, I don't know if life was necessarily easier after the move.

I had heard from my mom and some of her siblings that their father was very negative about their Métis heritage; he even became quite mean sometimes. He'd call them 'Wagon-burners' and weird things like that. I get the sense that it wasn't something they talked about growing up or felt any sense of pride in or ownership of. As far as my family, people still weren't okay with being Métis, I think a lot of the stigma existed after the Northwest uprising or rebellion and after Louis Riel was hanged. I think that affected

people in my family and in the larger Penetanguishene area. I'm speculating here because everything I know about Métis history I've had to find out on my own, so it's been a little bit more difficult for me. I never learned any of it in school or from anyone that I can remember.

However, I have learned a lot about Aboriginal customs, cultures and protocols through my work but that has mostly been with the Dene and the Beaver Nations. I've watched them play hand games and I've done round dancing and tea dancing but in those moments I've never felt 'I'm Métis' because I was doing other peoples traditions. As much as I feel so rich for knowing a bit about those cultural practices I often feel more confused about my own identity. I've never been in a community of only Métis people. I honestly don't even think that I have come into a place where I participate in Métis culture necessarily. When I meet other Métis people, it's so exciting to hear what their experiences are about but I always seem to end up thinking 'oh but he knows so much more than I do' or 'she is more Métis than I am.' I wonder what might happen if I find Métis community? While it would be a beautiful experience, I wonder if I would just compare myself to everyone else? Those moments of comparison usually put me back quite a bit in terms of owning my identity and feeling safe in sharing it.

When I started to identify outwardly to friends as being Métis, I began to learn and gain more information about the Métis peoples that were around Red River in Manitoba. I was told that there's some sort of difference and that maybe people in Ontario wouldn't be considered the true Métis. I don't really understand the difference, I just thought to myself 'okay, never mind.' I would return to feelings of not being 'Métis enough.' For me to be able to align what I know about my family with the history of

Makinac and Drummond Island, which is relatively well documented, feels great. I'm able to say 'this is legitimate, there's proof.' As an individual, there are some quiet moments where I feel grounded in my identity, but I struggle a lot with actually owning the identity in a general sense. I've told my closest friends with my full heart and they understand. In a more public setting however, I often choose not to identify myself, even if it's a direct question. I think a lot of that comes from the way that I look. My mother looks identifiably Aboriginal but I don't look very much like her; I look more like my father. I don't want anyone to look at me and say 'you're not Métis, what are you talking about?' So I just kind of gauge how safe I feel in each moment. I internally identify as Métis and I'm still working on that. I want to feel a bit stronger in my identity, maybe with some support of my family. That is really important to me. I'm so excited to find out how.

Frances Riviere

I live at the Northeast corner of section twenty, township three, range twenty-nine West of the fourth meridian in the Twin Butte District. It is about Five miles straight across the country from where I grew up on Drywood Creek.

My name is Frances Rose Riviere. I used to *hate* that name, because it was so long and when I was younger my Dad called me Rosy all the time. He's the only one that did that but I was *always* with him so that's what I was called. Of course when I got married I was Mrs. Bruder but I had my name changed back again to Riviere because that's who I was. It was also better for my writing career. My book *Washing at the Creek* has certainly gotten around. It's the story of the way it used to be in this country when I was growing up. The young people don't know what went on back in those days.

Between 2005-2010 I was president of the Métis Local 1880, which is here in Pincher Creek; I was one of the founding members of that Local. When we first started in, if you said you were a Métis, people asked you 'what is that?' and this was not that long ago. Since we've had a local in Pincher creek and all the things that we've done with the Métis Nation of Alberta, people know who a Métis is now around here. My kids all have their Métis cards but I have one daughter who is *very* much into the Métis nation. She volunteers a lot of her time in the Local office in Pincher.

Our ancestry stems from William J. Shanks Gladstone or 'Old Glad' whose wife was Harriet Leblanc. She came from the Lavalle family and they trace right back to the Red River. William and Harriet's first son, William Jr., married Mary (Marie) Samat Vandal of Fort Pitt Saskatchewan and she traced back to the Red River too. Of course that's my Great-Grandmother but I don't know really know the history too good beyond her, where they were from specifically and everything else. I'd like to get more history beyond Mary Samat, especially where she came from and her extended family. There isn't a lot written down about her family. All those people spoke Cree mostly so Mary didn't know how to read or write in English. Even when she got her scrip money, Old Glad was the one that did the writing on it for her. When they asked her name she said she didn't know because there was a Johnson there at the time and sometimes they just lived with a family and used their name; it complicated names but she is sometimes known as Marie Samat Johnson. I've read a lot of this history in books like *Prairie Grass to Mountain Pass*, which is all about the families in this area. I have all sorts of books on the Métis around here and books on the Métis Nation. I've even got Cree dictionaries and everything.

I'd actually love to learn Cree but I don't speak it fluently. My Grandmother Nellie Gladstone certainly spoke Cree and my dad used a lot of Cree words when we were kids; we'd pick some words up from him here and there but half the time we didn't even know what they meant. Dad told us so many Wesakichuck[6] stories and there were Cree words in there too but I would have liked to learn to really speak Cree. By the time I was a kid the language already dying in this country.

When I was young, we were so close to these reserves around here that we were totally associated with the Indians all the time and they used to just tell us that we had Indian blood in us. I would travel with my dad to the reserves picking up horses and I played with the Indian kids. We didn't see much difference in us but we were the minority in the country. The Riviere family and Gladstone's, they were pretty well the only Métis that was left here, but years ago this whole country was Métis. Many of the other families moved out when the settlers came in, which had a lot to do with the money they'd get from their scrips. They were poor and they needed the money so they sold their places here. Some of those families took that little bit of money from their scrip and went up North.

We were poor as kids too and so I was kind-of taught to rise above who I was because we were on the lower rung of society. My dad wouldn't exactly say 'don't be a Métis' he'd just tell us to 'rise above who you are.' He sometimes gave us kids the feeling that we were not quite as good as the white people were because they were out making things happen and we seemed to just stagnate. We certainly didn't have the same lifestyle

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[6] A trickster figure in Cree and Métis mythology. These stories were told "to encourage people to keep their obligations to the Creator" (Préfontaine & Barkwell, 2006 p.8)

as everybody else; nobody lived like we did. We lived in a little shack with six people and we were poor, there's no doubt about it. We even ate different than everyone else; we lived on elk meat and didn't have a garden or anything like that. Dad was a hunter and we ate an awful lot of elk meat but other than that we only had things you could buy that wouldn't freeze like beans and oatmeal and spaghetti; things that weren't going to freeze up in the wintertime because in that old shack everything froze every night. You couldn't even have fruit in a jar or it'd freeze and break. I knew we were different and I thought 'gee maybe it's not so good to be this way.' I felt like I should get out of there and go someplace and do something but I didn't feel that way for very long.

There was definitely prejudice in this country toward the Métis of my time because so many were gone and the rest weren't doing so well. I know after I got married my husband, who lived down on Drywood at the ranch there told me what folks would say about us. I remember him telling me that we were known as 'those Halfbreeds up the creek', that's what everybody called us. I remember how angry I got when he told me that; it wasn't said in a nice way *at all*, we just weren't considered quite as good as the rest of the people in that country were. So I found out these things did go on but when we were kids we didn't really notice it. Every time they had a dance down at Drywood my dad would do his jigging and my Uncle would play the violin. My dad also played the mouth organ and that was their music up at Drywood. So we were always totally accepted in the district. We didn't call ourselves Métis, we called ourselves Halfbreeds, but there was no stigma to it or anything.

After some of the families left this area they moved up near Grande Cache and Jasper, there's a lot of Métis up there now. I worked up there in the Wilmore Wilderness

for an outfitter for about three years. I was a cook but when you cook you do everything else too. I did a lot of chasing horses through the mountains, and packing horses when I was out there because I grew with all that. I've lived that way in this country since I was a kid. My dad was just a horse man *first and foremost* so he taught me a lot and I grew up loving horses and loving riding. I mixed up with horses and wood fires all the time, gathering and picking berries and herbs. I also have a lot of books on herbs. When I get very interested in something and go quite crazy over it then I'll switch to something else. I did a lot of beading as well. I'd sit out in the field, and if there was a flower right beside me then I'd draw that on instead of having a pattern and start beading it. Apparently that was the way my Grandmother did her beading too.

I've ridden in these mountains for twenty-five years and I know all the wildflowers and everything up there. Sometimes I just sit here and look at the mountains and think 'I would be loading my horse and heading for those mountains today if I could'; I used to ride everyday. I'd just go riding up the canyons and all over. I know every trail up in those mountains and every place to go. I didn't do anything *but* ride for all those years. I just lived here and rode whenever I wanted to. I was teaching for a while and I quit, I even quit subbing and I should have been looking for another job but I said to myself 'I'm just not going to do it; I'm going to do what I want for the rest of my life.' I just started riding in the mountains and I took a lot of people riding because I knew where all the trails were.

Because I was just living and riding in the mountains I never really knew where I belonged culturally or knew what being Métis was about until I joined the Métis Local in Lethbridge. That's when I found out we weren't just Halfbreeds we were Métis! I

remember that made me feel pretty good. I got so enthused when I found out about being a Métis. I thought to myself ‘oh, is this who I am?’ my daughter has experienced the same thing; I’m totally proud to be a Métis. They have a terrific culture and a terrific history.

For me, part of being Métis is knowing the land. We're looking into some land actually in the Local that’s up in the Gladstone valley. That was Gladstone land and we’re trying to get back some of that so we can get a land base here. Its very important to have a land base, if we could get back some of our land that the Gladstone’s owned up in the Gladstone valley we’d have a place to practice and protect our culture. In the Local we try to look into the reasons why would should get land back. There’s a lot of Métis people up there where Gladstone’s lived; their graves are there; we're trying to locate those graves because then we could say ‘well, gee, our people are buried here.’ I think we should have a land base here because of the amount of Métis that were in this country. Mountain Mill was all Métis and Old Glad owned that up there. He's the one that donated all that land for the church where the railroad trestle is.

I admire Old Glad, he was a man to look up to in his principles and the way that he raised every kid in his family that wasn't looked after. I have a lot of respect for the Scottish because of him. We were all so interested in those Tartans that he had. He was just a real good guy. So I identify a little with the Scottish side of our heritage. I don't identify with the English though. My mother was English and there was very little about the English that I admired. Hearing more and knowing the history of Canada and everything and what went on I certainly don't think much of them now. It’s a bad history. I don’t understand why one nationality should be able to come in here and do exactly as

they pleased with the Indians, and with the settlers. It changed this whole country and made it so everybody has to fight for their rights now. That's the way it is, it doesn't matter if the Métis picked berries up a certain creek or not! They don't even understand that around here, they don't go for it at all.

I've been here all my life and I've lived on the land; I've had free run of this country my whole life, which is really nice. Nobody ever stopped me from riding on the land everybody just knew that was me out there. I don't look favorably to moving to town but I won't be leaving the ranch behind because all my books are going with me and that knowledge is going with me. I'll be an Elder in the Métis Local in town too and in the summertime I'll be out here at the ranch. This is where I belong.

Sarah Brown

My full name is Sarah Elizabeth Brown. The name Elizabeth or Lizzie is after my Great-Grandmother on my father's side. My Métis roots come from the Iroquois peoples of West Virginia. The particular tribe we think our lineage is from is the Tuscarora. I've heard that there were some interracial marriages between Native Americans and African Americans who had been fighting in the Civil war. Lizzie moved up to Northern Saskatchewan from West Virginia some time after the civil war. I was told a story about the reason they left was over some sort of feud or incident where somebody got scalped and they had to escape up North. That's where the rest of my father's ancestry is from. I think in the North Battleford area but I don't know for sure. Unfortunately I know so little about what happened when they came to Saskatchewan. My father died when I was eleven and I don't know a whole lot about his side of the story. I have pictures of Lizzie and pictures of moccasins that she made. They have beautiful beadwork on them, which

is supposed to tell part of our family's story. Those moccasins are now in the hands of one of my cousins. Originally my Uncle went down to West Virginia and did a lot of the research on our family. Before he died, he put together a small package with the moccasins and pictures and my history and lineage as best he could because he really wanted me to get my Métis status.

I came to know all of this history by chance; I was working with an outdoor education program, which utilizes Aboriginal knowledges to support young people. As part of our training we participated in a sweat lodge ceremony. This was my first sweat lodge experience and I was really nervous. I had a lot of the anxiety I assume people feel in their first sweat lodge. Right from the start I was mesmerized by the Elder leading the ceremony and at one point I had this really strong emotional experience toward him. He looked exactly like my father. Up until this point in my life I had never made any connection between my father and any sort of First Nations lineage or Métis heritage. I asked my coworker if this type of response was normal and he said it wasn't and he asked me if I had a picture of my father. I happened to have a small photo in my wallet and as soon as my co-worker saw the photo he asked 'what's your fathers lineage? He's obviously not white.' I told him that he had some African American roots but he's from Northern Saskatchewan.' He said he was pretty sure my father was Native. That was kind of the beginning of that revelation for me.

It wasn't until a few years later when I met with my Uncle in Kamloops and asked him if there was any chance we had some Native blood. He said 'yeah, why don't you sit down and I'll tell you your story.' At this point, he'd already done a lot of research into our family and had found out that my Great-Grandmother Lizzie was born under a natural

bridge in West Virginia.

He actually found the bridge and tried to find as much evidence as he could. My Uncle was eventually granted his Métis status in BC. That meeting was the first time I'd come across anyone in the family who knew a lot about our ancestry and was really proud of his history.

I think, probably like many Métis people I have always struggled with my identity. Long before it had anything to do with what my lineage was, identity has always been one of my big journeys. I also think there are different flavours of identity crisis. Some people are trying to find their place in their community and other people have more of an existential identity crisis. I'm aware of the fact that my whole life I've felt a need to know 'who am I exactly?' because it was so clear to me that my family was different.

I mostly think of Métis as being mixed lineage or being synonymous with part First Nations. My mom's side as far as I know is all Celtic. She was born in Ireland and actually through her I have an Irish passport and my dad was definitely Aboriginal. Partly I think out of ignorance I don't really know enough about the history of the Métis. I have some basic understanding around Louis Riel. I know that the history is complex because identity is complex. I have friends that are First Nations that always say 'it's only dogs and Indians that have pedigree' because it is so common for them to be asked what fraction or percentage Aboriginal they are. When you identify as Irish, nobody needs you to prove that in any way. You can be Irish without having an Irish passport and you don't have to really claim whether you're part or half or quarter-breed; people just say you're Irish.

Despite my Irish roots I had always been really drawn to Native American

spirituality. I had some really strong knowings all my life that it was part of me but I never took it any further than a strong sense of knowing. When I finally heard and saw proof and pictures from my Uncle, I felt like it confirmed something I already knew. Part of my understanding of my identity and my lineage has often come from meeting with other people that I consider to be both Elders and intuitives who've gained knowledge through non-physical means and/or communication with other worlds. There's been some part of me that's always been drawn to medicine people. When I was in University, I read the book '*Black Elk Speaks*' because I was so interested in ideas about medicine people and Aboriginal teachings. The history behind '*Black Elk Speaks'* is really interesting because it's not really his words; it's his words written by John Neighard who was the ghostwriter of it. I ended up doing my undergraduate thesis on '*Black Elk Speaks'* which was my introduction to the complexity around bridging cultural gaps and also my introduction to reading people like Vine Deloria, Warren Churchill and learning about the American Indian Movement. I began to really sink my teeth into the complexities around appropriation and colonization.

I feel the majority of Canadians really didn't get an accurate story of Canadian history in school. I actually have this really strong memory of wondering 'what's the whole story with the Native Americans in this part of the world?' As a kid I was told one narrative about Canadian History: basically North America was discovered, it was filled with these primitive Indians and we essentially made some arrangements with them to be here and own the land, they sold it to us, and now it's ours. I think that is a misguided narrative. My concept now of decolonization is trying, as best as I can, within a colonial system to think outside of that narrative with some awareness of the fact that those stories

were not the truth. I think trying to free myself from all the institutionalized discourse and oppression that came out of that lie is a step toward decolonization. I am really inspired in the realm of decolonization through both young Native American activist friends and people like Winona LaDuke (2012). I also have friends who are First Nations Elders who help to remind me that part of the process of decolonization is through truth and reconciliation of their past and their stories of residential schools; their stories of abuse and the kind of systematic oppression that leads to extreme self-esteem issues.

When I think about a settler or a colonizer I have this image of this oppressive white person that's coming over and taking things that aren't theirs and claiming that wealth as their own. Part of me felt that narrative didn't seem to fit with my family's story. However in some ways my family *did* come over and gain wealth in North America in a country they weren't born in. I've had a hard time reconciling the fact that I know my family is part of that colonization. I completely admit and am aware that I've lived my life with white privilege. I guess what that ambiguity means to me is that in some ways, I represent the complexity of the story. I really feel that all Métis people embody this connection. I feel that we're physical representatives of this cultural gap. I think to a certain degree part of my life journey or life challenge is to continually understand how to bridge spaces between cultures both within myself and outside of myself.

Another piece of being Métis to me is somewhat more romanticized. Part of me feels like I have a bloodline that connects me to this fundamentally different ancestry. I honestly feel that is something that's in my DNA, I know that is dangerous to say out-loud because it feels like a romanticized notion of the noble savage. However, I do very

much feel like I have this strong connection to my ancestry and part of that is I feel like I have some medicine, some knowings and some skills and awareness that I think come more from that lineage. My story is further complicated because the other part of my family is Celtic and that tradition also has a unique and strong respect of the spirit world.

Definitely the more time I spend in sweat lodges and ceremony, on reservations and in communities connecting with people, the more I feel connected to that Indigenous part of myself. In fact the only people who have ever physically recognized my Native lineage have been First Nations people. White people almost don't even believe I'm Aboriginal. They'll say 'come on, there's no way' but when I'm in a sweat lodge, that is when people around me say 'wow I can really see your bone structure, I can really see your Métis lineage.' In that way identity is more of a spiritual/personal thing for me. Part of my strong sense of spirituality is through my dream world. I have one spirit guide in particular that I don't see completely but I know has darker skin and when I am feeling most connected spiritually to my ancestors and through the dream world to my really strong inner intuition. I guess that's when I feel most Indigenous.

Another complexity in my story is around skin colour. When people say to me 'you may have Métis lineage but your life had white privilege and you didn't have any of the repercussions of being a First Nations person in Canada' that affects me. The fact is that my father clearly came from this place where he had a lot of pain, dysfunction and trauma in his family and I am somewhat connected to that through him. While I may not have experienced the same difficulties, in some ways what I identify as my Métis lineage is that story of that pain and trauma and yet I would feel guilty saying that to people. Its not that I'm bringing this intergenerational trauma to light so I can claim I'm somehow

more Métis but I think because that is part of my story, it is something that I do connect with that identity.

I wonder how many other Métis people have had experiences where people are expressing racist comments, particularly comments where they degrade First Nations people, and maybe get caught off guard when there's a moment where a racist judgment just hangs. You haven't necessarily contributed to it but you haven't actively judged that person for it. There are moments like that where I've felt 'wow I had a choice there and because I'm not as visually recognized as being a minority I had the privilege of letting it go.'

Perhaps one of the more significant ways I connect to my identity is through the work I do as an outdoor educator. I've had many experiences in wilderness settings that have taken me out on the land. I had a conversation with a colleague recently about how all experiences on the land are culturally framed and it made me wonder 'what is a direct experience on the land that isn't culturally interpreted?' Before I was aware of my Métis heritage and before I spent more time around Native people I had only one cultural lens for those experiences and it was always an experience in the wilderness. Later, when these First Nations people introduced me to different cultural interpretations of the land and metaphors like 'you're walking on the bones of your ancestors' or about mother earth as having flesh and the water being her blood, that really opened up a different understanding of identity and spirituality for me. I've always been drawn to being on the land as much as possible and guiding people in the wilderness because there's just something that happens to me there, a connection to a more ancient part of my soul so I'm really driven to have that experience over and over again.

I think these privileges come with a responsibility to continually make efforts to decolonize. For me, that means to decolonize my mind, to decolonize the systems I'm a part of and to use whatever power I have to disrupt the power imbalances that are part of the story and then continually go on this, often difficult, journey to find out who I really am.

Sarah Pocklington

My name is Sarah Pocklington I live in Edmonton Alberta but I started off the world in Bloomington Indiana. Pocklington is a very English name. There's even a city of Pocklington England. My Dad's parents were from England however my parents are both from the Toronto area. My dad is English and Black Irish and my mom is Cree and Scottish. My mother was actually raised by her Scottish Grandmother. During her youth they didn't refer to themselves as Métis so much as Halfbreeds. However, for me, being Métis is a cultural identity. I can't speak for anybody else but when my mom talks about being a Halfbreed, she is referring to her actual half First Nations and half European heritage. I don't know if other people use the term in that way but my Mother would always say 'I'm a Halfbreed.' She never denied who she was or what her ancestral background was. I see myself as Métis because of the cultural knowledges I've gained not only my ancestral lineage. For me it has to do with a connection to community, and following general protocols and teachings that have been shared with me. This process is how I have developed my worldview and identity. I tend to think of my worldview more as Indigenous rather than specifically Métis because in my experiences with non-urban Aboriginal communities I've found cultural nuances from specific places have had a large influence on my worldview. Because I don't have knowledge of a discrete

community where I came from I can't align with one specific worldview necessarily – my mothers father was Cree from Northern Quebec but we don't know any more than that. That being said, I've lived in Alberta most of my life and have been accepted by Aboriginal communities here in Edmonton as well as smaller rural communities around Alberta. Thus my worldview is difficult to articulate because it's more of a generalized understanding of the ways cultures are built, general ways of seeing the world, and of understanding values, and people's roles that I've accumulated during my time spent with Aboriginal peoples in various contexts.

One of the things I know is that Métis people have always been very political and they've always been very political through their music. I actually had the occasion to look up some of the songs that were written back in the earlier nineteen hundreds during my research into Aboriginal music in Canada. Many of those songs are really protest songs; they are very strong songs about who we are as a people. I have always been very political, through my music and otherwise. Part of that probably comes from who I am as a person but I was also raised by very political parents so I don't know where that piece begins and ends. I know that being political has worked for me.

My mother was fairly involved with rights for Indian women. Now, music that I write definitely has political elements and I'm very aware of how that is a part of Métis history. Growing up I didn't necessarily ever have an identity where I walked around thinking 'I'm Métis.' I walked around thinking 'I'm Sarah' but I knew these things about my ancestry and that was just part of who I was. My family went to Pow Wows in different communities; we've always done that. I feel very fortunate I have really amazing people as parents who exposed me to diverse ideas and experiences and who've also done

incredibly important work in their lives.

I didn't think about any of these experiences or what that meant in terms of identity until I started taking courses in university. It was academic exposure to these topics that evoked a curiosity to know more about my culture. When I started to pursue an understanding about what Indigenous knowledges were, I began to think about my identity in new ways. I asked myself 'what does it mean to be Cree, as opposed to Métis?' Ideas about Indigineity really interested me. Then I began trying to find out who I was and how I fit into this identity. It's been a little challenging because I still don't know where my ancestral family originated in Quebec.

When I was in my late twenties the whole identity thing really bothered me, I felt really insecure about it. I wasn't sure what to call myself. I would hear all the time 'you don't look like you're Aboriginal.' Meanwhile I was exploring questions about how I fit in and what my identity was and how I understood myself; that was a really hard time for me. Some people don't realize that there are many Métis people who have blue eyes and blonde hair. There's also a lot of *status First Nations* people who have blue eyes and blonde hair so it's not as simple as skin colour for me. In moments of doubt I experienced real fear around the identity question. Part of it was because I couldn't state what community I was from. While I was doing my masters in Native Studies in Peterborough many of my colleagues and friends were Ojibway. Most of them were able to say 'my name is so and so and I'm from this certain place.' Being able to say your lineage and the place you're from really puts you in a holistic context, especially for Indigenous peoples in Canada, and I couldn't do that. So I thought, 'how does it work?' 'How do I engage with this?' One truth that made me feel better was that there were so many people like me

who were separated from their culture, whether they were involved with the sixties scoop or otherwise segregated from cultural teachings.

Despite feeling disconnected from a specific community I did feel I had a certain connection to my parents piece of land up at our cabin near Hinton Alberta. I grew up living in Edmonton but where other kids in the city might have gone with their family for two weeks on holiday in the summer, I was living in the bush in the summers. I didn't realize how deeply connected to that place I was until recently. Out there everything had to do with the land. Fishing, canoeing, swimming, gathering fruit from the land, berry picking, having fires, learning about animals all of those things that you do when you're outside. I pretty much got up in the morning and went outside and came back in at suppertime. We were allowed to explore and learn all on our own out there.

Part of what I've learned is there's not a lot of question asking in Aboriginal cultures. One of the ways to engage and learn is actually to observe. There was a lot of fear for me in identifying as a Métis person and about whether I'd be accepted by my community but I spent time getting to know people who were connected and engaged in ways that I felt comfortable with. In that way, I could observe and learn more about my culture. I really connected with an Elder who was one of the language instructors at Trent University and she took me under her wing. We became good friends and she happened to be teaching the class on identity, she asked me to be her helper and I learned a lot about myself through that experience.

I've also been able to connect to cultural teaching through language. I've never spoken Cree but my dad is a fluent Cree speaker. Both my dad and my sister took Cree at University which is very interesting because my dad isn't Native but he would teach us

some words. The Cree that I've learned was through him and being in community. I also learned words that Elders would say to me especially when they were joking around. I gained some language knowledge through singing as well. In fact, a significant highlight for me was when I wrote a song about the Northern lights; I composed the song in English and sent it to a Cree speaker who then translated it. She sent me a tape speaking every word correctly in Cree. I listened to that tape over and over until I spoke the words exactly the way she did and then I put the melody to the Cree version. The greatest compliment I've ever received was when that Elder said to me 'the way that you sing that song, you sound like a Cree speaker and nobody would know that you're not.' One of the moments when I felt most connected to being Métis was when I was singing with Asani at a youth gathering. We were sharing our new version of "Oh Canada." It was a formal affair we went out on stage and performed in front of a huge crowd. There was an unsettling pause after we'd finished, absolutely no sound. Then all of a sudden it was like a volcano erupting. There was just this huge roar and *everybody* stood on their feet; people were clapping and cheering and stomping. It scared the hell out of us. We jumped backwards but it was so powerful that we all started to cry. I thought to myself 'I feel so accepted, so at home, so comfortable and so loved right here right now.'

For me, cultural awareness is about remembering, regaining, and re-learning who we are and where we come from. That connection to culture, acceptance by community, cultural practices, and understanding teachings is what grounds me in my identity. An Elder once took me aside and told me 'I just want to say that the role you play as a Métis woman is really important because you're one of the people that builds bridges between cultures; you are a product of both.' Before then I had never really thought of myself as

being a cultural bridge builder. I will say that where I’m most comfortable is within culture and community. That’s home to me. When I'm with Indigenous people: Métis people, First Nations, and non-status people, that’s when I really feel like I can just be who I am. I don't have to prove myself or defend myself or be anything other than what I am. I feel safe. I think that sense of community and sense of belonging has become what's important. That’s the part that matters. Because I’m already who I am.

Chapter Five: Song Of Myself

This chapter is designed to unfold the process I have undergone in discovering my Métis ancestry thus far and is titled after Whitman's (1959) poem which describes his complex identification. He states "Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes" (p. 68). I have written this section in a style that matches the cadence of an oral storytelling. This style is an effort to mimic my journey of coming to know similar to Carpenter (1977) and MacKinnon's (2012) writing. The writing in this chapter is: a) cyclical, often returning to different ideas as they fit into the larger narrative; b) emergent, offering the reader a sense of what it was like to have unknown pieces of information; and c) loosely chronological to both facilitate reading and to parallel my process of learning. Because of the complex relationship between chronology and memory, my writing here follows actual timelines as closely as possible with intermittent clarifications out of chronological order. It is a challenging endeavour to display oral histories in written word (Cruikshank, 1998). I hope this writing gives justice to the stories and songs of my ancestors.

My name is Robert Blair Montgomery. It is a Scottish name and although I had no choice in the matter of my naming I have grown quite fond of it. I could claim that I am Scottish through and through – my mother's side of the family is Scottish, some of my paternal ancestors are Scottish and I even look Scottish. Still, I feel compelled to acknowledge my Aboriginality. In my more vulnerable moments I think about what it would be like to have a more Métis sounding last name or wish I looked more Native. Would I feel a different sense of Métis identity? I am aware of all the extra hardship that goes along with having darker skin, or being more recognizably Aboriginal. I know I

have privileges in society because of my white skin and yet I sometimes wish I didn't feel so out of place within my identity. I am ashamed to have these feelings; I am aware that most Indigenous peoples have to prove their legitimacy in settler contexts and work extra hard for recognition based on their merits as people simply because of how they look (King, 2012; Richardson, 2006).

Despite this, a friend of mine recounts "[being oppressed] is not our culture." This statement speaks to the resilience of Aboriginal peoples amidst the tyranny of colonial oppression. The most easily noticed difference between visually identifiable Aboriginal peoples and myself is my skin, which affords me white privilege. While some Aboriginal peoples are effectively forced into Western culture through settler colonialism and still experience racism, I am allowed to actively resist the pieces of settler culture I disagree with without any social consequence because of my white privilege. Despite this, much of settler culture makes me feel uncomfortable and most of the Aboriginal cultural teachings I've been shown feel more resonant to me. I recognize my resistance to settler culture is a further privilege of my light skin; I can choose when and where to identify as Métis (Richardson, 2006).

I have come to a place where I nearly always identify myself as Métis, especially in spaces when I feel vulnerable or that I may be labeled inauthentic because it helps me to challenge my ambivalence. Why is this urge to identify so persistent? Why do I feel the need to reclaim these stories of my Métis self? And, why do I feel uncomfortable in monolithic settler narratives? Sarah Brown states "*I could present myself as just being Irish. I have an Irish passport, and I could just claim that as being my lineage and not recognize the other part of my story but that would be a complete lie*." Her words

articulate the complexity of my own story.

Perhaps my stories of Métis ancestry are seldom told because they are confusing and unruly. By adding these stories into my larger identification narratives, I am disrupting what it means to be Canadian. With all of my overlapping and complex identities it is not simply a matter of acquiescing to a singular Canadian identity but instead, embracing my complexity. *"I guess what being Métis means to me is that in some ways I represent the complexity of the story"* – Sarah Brown. A strong narrative for many Canadians is that we are a collective, multicultural society that embraces a mosaic of all the people living on this land, this narrative has been criticized for it's Eurocentric viewpoint (Andersen, 2008; Donald, 2012; Gaudry & Hancock, 2012; Lowan-Trudeau, 2014). Claims to multicultural acceptance of cultures have not at all been my experience in this country. I have seen at best, a tolerance of different cultural worldviews and at worst, violent acts visited upon those who are outside certain boundaries of the supposed mosaic. For example, Andersen (2014) describes the policies of government agencies heavily influencing public perception of Métis peoples and usurping their agency to define themselves.

Here, I present my own stories of layering, weaving, and negotiation of my complex identities. These stories disrupt what I consider to be oversimplified notions of what it means to live on this land, to be a settler, and – for me to be Aboriginal. These stories are necessarily told from my perspective. I do not make claims of objectivity in the narratives and while every effort was made to maintain integrity, the stories almost certainly contain contradictions.

To begin, I will tell stories of my Métis ancestors through the generations as I

have come to learn them from both written and oral histories. I then continue my story into the present while interweaving how I make sense of these narratives through my musings and, intermittently articulated by participants in this study.

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My fifth-Great Grandfather, William Shanks Gladstone, or "Old Glad" was born in Montreal in December of 1832 to Scottish immigrant parents. His published diary (Historic Trails Society of Alberta, 1985) recounts the early exploits of his life in great detail. When I first read the tales about life in the 1800's I was amazed at his relatively respectful representations of Indigenous peoples especially given the racialized culture of the time.

At sixteen, young William signed on with the Hudson's Bay Company and began his formidable yet enchanting journey westward. He left Montreal along with 53 other men, including thirteen Iroquoian guides in three canoes. Together they paddled up the St. Lawrence Seaway into the Great Lakes through the French River. Eventually he found himself at Fort William (now Thunder Bay) on the shores of Lake Superior where he was re-organized into a smaller group of men that would travel further into the country to Norway House. This small fort was situated on a river connecting to Lake Winnipeg. He then took up with another brigade and moved even further westward to Fort Edmonton. Along the way, they engaged in trade with First Nations groups while ferrying goods from eastern Forts to more Western company posts. Eventually William landed in Rocky Mountain House; during most of his early years, he alternated between Rocky and Fort Edmonton as he took up the trade of boat builder. While in Edmonton he spent time with Father Lacombe (a prominent figure in the early West) and William also met Harriet

Leblanc (my fifth Great-Grandmother) one summer at Fort Edmonton. Harriet was Métis and her family originated from near the Red River settlement in Manitoba. She was a tough woman, once even saving Old Glad from a gunshot by chopping the hand of his attacker with an axe. They moved together around the country following William's work with the HBC. Eventually they purchased land near the Red River, however the West called them back, and Old Glad used his carpentry skills to help build Fort Whoop Up – present day Lethbridge, Alberta. After moving steadily around the country for many years, they finally settled in Mountain Mill Southern Alberta near what is now Waterton Lakes National park. Here, along with a few other Métis families: the Rivieres, Lawrences, and Spences (Riviere, 2008) they lived and raised their children. One of Old Glad's relatives was the first Aboriginal Senator of Canada, his nephew James Gladstone (Canada Senate, n.d.) Frances reports:

> *James was granted Indian Citizenship but he isn't Indian he's a Métis. They made him an Indian down there because he went to the Anglican school all the time when he was little kid on the Reserve…But he's actually the very same blooded Métis as what I am.*

This relationship is significant because the Gladstone Valley near Pincher Creek is named after Senator Gladstone, which connects my family to a specific area of land that is very important to me.

Old Glad's first son, William Gladstone Jr. married Marie (Mary) Samat Vandal of Fort Pitt Saskatchewan. She was born from an un-named Cree mother and a Métis father. William Jr. and Marie (Mary) lived in Southwestern Alberta with their Métis relatives and friends living off the land where they built their homes. Frances informed

me:

> *When she got her scrip money, Old Glad was the one that did the writing on it for her. When they asked her name she said "I don't know" because there was a Johnson there and sometimes they just lived with a family and they used their name. So it just complicated names…they all spoke Cree so she didn't know how to read or write English*

I have found very little written documentation on my family from this period, perhaps due to the difficulty that Métis peoples were facing during the dark period following the execution of Louis Riel in 1885. However, during this time Marie Samat Gladstone, wrote in for scrip for her two sons who were placed at a residential school near present day High River. She was very direct in her letters to the government, and after being ignored continuously wrote:

> *They promised to send me the shares belonging to my children but have not done so yet. As I am obliged to support them alone, the money would help me out. Now I want to know whether you can send the scrips or not. If you can not I would like to know as I won't bother myself any more about them*.

Marie Samat Gladstone (nee Vandal)'s daughter Madeline (my Great-Great-Grandmother) married David Carpenter and they lived on Carpenter ranch in Southwest Alberta. They gave birth to three children: Bill, Kathleen and Frank Carpenter.

I am very fortunate to have met my Great-Grandmother – Nana Kay (Kathleen). She was a very superstitious woman and I often wonder if her superstitions came from an Aboriginal spirit memory that connects to metaphysical worlds. I remember my Nana Kay as a kind, gentle and loving soul who was simultaneously stern and cautious. A

home movie of my sister and me when we were very young shows us playing in my Grandmother's backyard. I was dancing to a song played over a tape player while my sister ran around, both my Nana Barb (Grandma) and Nana Kay (Great-Grandma) were dutifully watching over our games. Nana Kay was wearing a pink, Hawaiian style shirt, and gently holding a curved, thin wooden cane. She had her charcoal grey hair in a tightly curled perm with frosted white tips on the sides. It is easy to see the love between all three of our generations in that video. This recording is perhaps my best, albeit facilitated, memory of my Great-Grandma. I later learned that my Nana Kay had led a life of austerity; a life that I never could have imagined while dancing around carefree in my Nana Barb's backyard.

I was about four or five years old at the time that video was made. When my Nana Kay was five years old her mother, Madeline Gladstone, died tragically on the Carpenter Ranch located just outside Waterton. Madeline's husband, David Carpenter needed to continue work and support his young children. Not knowing what else to do, he sent all three children to Father Lacombe Convent School what is now Calgary – indeed this presents an interesting intersection between Old Glad's friend, Father Lacombe, and the institution bearing his name. The children were allowed to return home during their summers, however their father left my Nana Kay and her two siblings alone for a summer on the ranch while he was away working. They spent the summer making themselves pancakes and otherwise fending for themselves at a very young age. I am left to assume they received some visits from their father who was involved in oil exploration near Turner Valley Alberta or that they might have had caretakers in the form of their many relatives in the area. However, after the summer passed, they returned to Father Lacombe

School.

Father Lacombe was not a residential school, it was a Catholic boarding school and convent; while I can't speak to the conditions at the school specifically, the sense I get from stories I've heard is that the school was a harsh place to grow up. Upon arrival Kathleen, Frank, and Bill were separated by gender and had to sneak off when they wanted to talk to each other and converse through holes in the fence. Early on Kathleen had been given the strap for not having anything to say during confession. To avoid being repeatedly beaten for her silence, she began to steal the cream off the headmasters breakfast platter as it passed her dorm in a dumbwaiter, giving her both a sinful treat and something to confess.

Students at the Lacombe School were permitted to send letters to their parents however all letters were read over by the resident nuns before sending them off, thus censoring any outgoing complaints about conditions at the school (B. Montgomery, Personal communication, January, 2015). After demonstrating good behaviour, Nana Kay's older brother, Bill, was assigned to help deliver the mail from the school. He snuck a letter to his father in the stack of student correspondence that described their situation and requested for David Carpenter to facilitate their urgent removal from the school.

Their father agreed Bill was old enough however he refused to leave without his younger siblings and so they were all taken out of school after approximately six years in the convent. Without any place to go all three children were separated and put to work on different ranches in Southern Alberta. Nana Kay worked and lived at the McCrae ranch for many years. Later, as a chambermaid at the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton, she met a young man and they began to court one another. They never married but my Nana

Kay became pregnant with my Grandmother and eventually had to journey to Calgary to give birth.

Barbara Marceline Carpenter was born on June 10, 1930. Shortly afterward Nana Kay moved to Lethbridge where a Christian family took both my Great-Grandmother and my newborn Grandmother in. Nana Kay would attend citywide dances in Lethbridge where she met Ernest Schawalder; they began dating and were soon married. He adopted my Nana Barb and then Ernest and Kathleen had another daughter – my Great-Auntie Sylvia. Nana Kay kept quiet about her Aboriginal heritage except to close family members; I suppose this was due to the racism toward Aboriginal peoples at the time and is demonstrative of what Richardson (2006) names tactical survival.

There were certainly some events that were left out of the stories told to me by my family. I know that Nana Barb didn't want to be stigmatized for being adopted and so she told very few people about it. My Dad and his siblings knew about the adoption but they continued to hold that secret for her as well. It wasn't until very late in her life on one of my visits that I learned this story about my Nana. Ernest worked for W.T. Hill feedlots outside of Lethbridge and they all lived in a house on the W.T. Hill property until moving to the South side of Lethbridge where Nana Kay and Ernest lived until their passing. All these stories involve struggles of austerity and hardship for my relatives and ancestors. I especially respect the women in my family for their resilience since they were much less heralded. I believe these brave women demonstrate incredible strength through their stories of survival.

* * *

I learned most of this information by listening to stories from my Auntie Lee and

my Nana Barb. They had collected documents into a bright purple folder that was stored in a flimsy dried out cardboard box at my Nana's house. Some information also came from corresponding clarifications offered by family members that I wrote down in journals for this project and for my own interest. The purple folder has shaky hand written lettering that reads "Métis folder" and contains photocopies of scrip applications from my ancestors, family trees written by relatives, letters to the government and research documents about Métis families in Southern Alberta. The gigantic stack of written documentation, includes many pages that read "Canadian Halfbreed Commission" (see appendix 5 and 6). These documents are a written piece of my history but tell only a small part of the story. Unfortunately, written records seem to sit at the highest level of legitimacy in Western society (Lawrence, 2002), even over the oral stories of my relatives. Although my family's history is confusing, I am fortunate to have a reasonably well documented account of my ancestry. Many of my family's records were written down. Despite my criticisms regarding the privileging of written over oral testimony I am grateful to have access to these records.

I'm also thankful that my Auntie Lee engaged in a process of finding information about our Métis ancestry. These files later enabled membership for both my Auntie Lee and Uncle Bill in different provincial and territorial Métis organizations in Canada. My Aunt, Uncle and late Grandma are the closest relatives I have that openly identify themselves as Métis. While I was growing up my Auntie lived in British Columbia where she received Métis membership status. She now resides in the Northwest Territories and has gained membership to the Northwest Territories Métis Nation there also.

Because I didn't see my Auntie Lee very often when I was young I heard most of

these stories, in pieces, from my Nana Barb. I remember very clearly feeling settled in my identity when I first learned about being Métis, I felt as though I had always known there was something unique about our history and no one would ever question whether or not this history was legitimate or if I was indeed a Métis person. Sarah Brown states: *"I think that it just felt like it was confirming something I already knew."* At the time I knew very little about the political climate between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state.

Being Métis was something that I didn't understand or share with many people; however, in my youthful way I felt satisfied to know that this was part of my family story. Kayla's process similarly intersects mine: *"I began to identify as Métis more so because we had that power of that little bit of information…the more I felt I understood it the more my feet kind of landed on the ground."* Still, I didn't really know of any benefits this identity would offer me nor did I know who the Métis peoples really were, for me it was about a feeling of belonging. My knowledge early on was solely relegated to a distant association with Native people and connected to one ancestor who helped build Fort Whoop-Up (present day Lethbridge).

I also felt some ambivalence about outwardly identifying as Métis when I first learned of my ancestral connection to Métis people, preferring mostly to keep it a secret. Andersen (2014) submits that most people in Canada do not have a clear conception of who Métis peoples are, and Métis identities often puzzle me due to the complexities of cultural identification. Frances reported an experience representing this complexity: *"We didn't call ourselves Métis, we called ourselves Halfbreeds …but I never really knew where I belonged or knew much about it until I joined the Métis local at Lethbridge."* To hear an Elder say this is validating because I don't feel the need to understand all of these

complexities so immediately.

In my late teens I vehemently decided not to apply for Métis membership. At the time I felt I didn't deserve to have membership status or the associated benefits because I had not suffered like other Métis peoples and because I didn't know the culture. Sarah Brown explained similar ambivalence about her identification *"when people say 'you may have Métis lineage but your life had white privilege and you didn't have any of the repercussions of being like a First Nations person in Canada."*

As I began to learn more about Métis culture I became increasingly confused about all of the congruent and contradicting stories. How did I fit into all of these stories? Similarly, Kayla stated: "*I remember a turning point when I was in my mid teens where I started to ask questions and become interested in my ancestry"* and Sarah P. stated *"I needed to understand myself … at that point that I did a lot of soul searching and learning about identification or identity; who I am."* It appears at some point the participants and I have all felt unclear about what being Métis was.

Because of my uncertainty I used to tell people that I was a direct descendant of Louis Riel. I was sure that I'd heard this from my Auntie although now I'm not convinced she ever actually said so. She may have told me we descend from the Louis Riel Métis, or that we are "big M" rather than "small m" Métis – meaning that we were connected to Red River rather than of mixed Aboriginal and European heritage (Andersen, 2014). Admittedly, at the time I didn't know who Louis Riel was or what he had done for the Métis Nation until just before graduate school. I truly believed that I was his direct kin. I also told people I was related to Chief Big Bear, when I saw his picture on an eighth grade textbook I let all of my friends know, and nobody ever questioned me.

Big Bear was a Cree chief who was instrumental in treaty negotiations in what is now Saskatchewan (Dempsey, 1984). I found out later I am indeed related to him, very distantly through the marriage of Harriet Leblanc's brother. He had married Chief Big Bear's daughter, or so it is told. A lot of this information was focused around aligning myself with male characters and narratives that were relatively well known in history. Identifying with "great men" and subscribing to preconceived notions of Métisness inadvertently engaged me in reifying patriarchal colonial narratives and Indigenous stereotypes (Andersen, 2014; McKegney, 2014)

In school we learned very little about the Métis and because of my cultural ignorance I told people I was 1/16th or 1/32nd Native rather than Métis specifically because I didn't know what blood quantum I was. Stories that I heard from my family confused me and I was trying to fill in very large knowledge gaps on my own. Blood quantum seemed to be a quantifiable avenue to identification and was also how many people I knew recognized Native heritage. In one of her interactions Sarah Brown recalls a First Nations friend stating, *"it's only dogs and Indians that have pedigree."* This way of identifying may still be evident as Frances related

> *I just explained to my little grandchildren here the other night; the little boy… he said "Grandma, are we one quarter, or are we one eighth or what?" and I said "You're a Métis; you trace back to the Red River, and you're a Métis and we don't even use one eighth or one quarter."*

It is thus very difficult for me to navigate all the narratives I have heard throughout my life and during this research process. I even find myself questioning these stories and sometimes allow my inner positivist to critically delegitimize my own oral

histories. The documents I have been given merely offer small pieces of the puzzle and the oral histories are incomplete, unspoken or forgotten. As I write this narrative I feel vulnerable about naming my ambivalence and uncertainty. I have now opened myself up in text to scrutiny by those who would name me a wannabe (Richardson, 2006) or state that I do not belong to a Métis identity. I remain suspended in an ambivalent space that draws me deep into this identity, this sense of cultural understanding and a responsibility to learn these stories lest they be lost by the next generation.

Each time I gain new information or find a missing piece of my story I accelerate into a frenzied rehashing of all the historical information I have come know so far. I look back to the documents, family trees, literature and diaries that I have; I revisit the Métis registry from U of A (Métis national database, n.d.); I send emails to my Auntie and Uncle; I call registries and try to fit any new piece into the web of my experience. These bursts of emphatic searching are exhilarating and can last for days. Kayla describes a similar moment she experienced *"my mom shared something with me in a text message that I immediately went and looked up. I thought 'Oh! we have this piece of information, this is amazing!' and so I re-went and looked into it."*

My frantic searching to situate myself is often followed by a dénouement where I find some barrier and/or get distracted by life's more immediate concerns and pressures. These roadblocks engender a feeling of hopelessness and futility that I may never belong, which in turn affects my fragile sense of Métis self-hood. Kayla describes her experience with similar roadblocks: *"There were a ton of stopping points trying to figure this out. My mom's parents died when she was young so her knowledge keepers passed by the time she was seventeen."* The feelings associated with this ancestry are inexplicably important

to me especially during these moments of elated searching.

It has, however, taken some convincing and coaching from First Nations, Métis and settler friends of mine to embrace my Métis self. In revisiting my earlier teenaged decision to avoid membership I decided to begin the arduous process of applying for Métis membership in Alberta in late 2011. I first had to confront the ambivalence and uncertainty I had held at such a safe distance. That is not to say that I have overcome these feelings, however I have embraced the fact that discomfort and ambiguity are part of my identification experience.

When I revisited my family's Métis history I was living in Southern Alberta not far from Pincher Creek, where my ancestors had settled so long ago. I went to see my Grandmother in Lethbridge and retrieved the purple Métis folder from a dark oak hutch where she kept other scattered letters and documents. She was so gentle while she offered me the papers along with snacks and soda; as I waded through the overwhelming stack of paper, I felt supported by her presence. My Grandma had always loved her family and encouraged me to keep asking these questions about our history. Armed with this stack of paper, and a levitating excitement about the prospect of finding some validation in my identity, I drove to the Provincial government building in Lethbridge. My Uncle Bill invited me to his office where he helped me photocopy all the necessary documents for my application. I worked steadily all morning; I filled out the forms and wrote out our family tree. Excitement welled up within me. I experienced a sense of belonging that I had not felt so deeply in all my life. I was elated to learn so much from the pages of history. While reading through the pages I uncovered some of the stories my ancestors had been through. My young imagination began to fill in the blanks and paint scenes of

what life might have been like for these people, my people. I sat for hours working through all of the documents, letters and forms in a tiny office completely immersed in a reverie of nostalgia. When I had completed my application I felt a warm sense of relief: could it really be so simple? I hurried downstairs to submit my application and found the Métis office was closed. Not long afterward the Lethbridge branch of the Métis Nation of Alberta office and all of its membership files were moved to Calgary. This was one of many roadblocks in gaining Métis membership. For me, what had been a fragile excitement induced by ideas of identity reclamation quickly deflated. I returned home and filed my application away, not to be returned to for many months.

After my time near Pincher Creek I began working with an organization as a youth worker at a wilderness program, I met many Aboriginal people there who helped me rekindle curiosity about my history. I was living in Canmore Alberta at the time and took regular trips to Calgary where I finally decided to submit my application to the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) offices.

When I arrived and walked into the Métis office and at first, found only two people waiting in the lobby. After waiting a few moments the receptionist returned and I asked for assistance in submitting my membership application. I later learned that the folks sitting in the lobby had been the two notary members of the regional office. While I waited nervously they were laughing and joking; I awkwardly tried to engage in some conversation but felt very out of place on account of my own insecurities. Until that moment I had been reasonably secure in my Métis identity. It seemed so concrete to me. All the documentation was there, in my hand, however, in that moment I felt unsure of myself as a person, and as Kayla said *"[it was] kind of confusing for me just because I*

[hadn't] been in a larger Métis community ever."

One of the people in the lobby began handing me an array of pamphlets and brochures, the MNA newsletter, information on the general meetings and explaining how I could find a job through Métis organizations. I left with a stack of documents and a sinking feeling of despair. I'm still not sure why I felt so out of place, perhaps because I was seeking out a community without realizing that to build relationships in entirely new contexts takes time. Just before I left I was invited to a luncheon to be held by the MNA at a community centre a couple of weeks later.

At the luncheon I met a man who was related to Marie Rose Smith, a now famous Métis woman who had resided in Pincher Creek (MacKinnon, 2012). I shared lunch with him and he told me about the book *Fifty Dollar Bride* by Jock Carpenter (1977) which documents some of the Métis families in the Pincher Creek area. I found out that there are Gladstones in Marie Rose Smith's family tree.

I tried to help out where I could; I was noticeably the youngest person at the luncheon and did not find the sense of belonging that I was looking for. The whole experience left me feeling a little more out of place, which added to my uncertainty about the process of my application. Was I too far removed from my ancestry? Did I belong here? Kayla describes feeling less Métis: *"Most of the times that I've felt less Métis have been when I know other Métis people in the circle and level myself against them; what do they know? What do they do? Where are they from?"* I too catch myself comparing my story to other Métis peoples that I know. This behaviour certainly causes me anxiety and disassociates me from my own legitimate family history.

In early efforts to learn about my ancestry I attempted to connect culturally

through building relationships with First Nations peoples. I felt uncertain about the influence of First Nations cultures on Métis cultures. I had always conflated the two cultures in my head. Because of my ignorance of Métis cultures I tried to engage with First Nations peoples in hopes of constructing mixed experiences that I assumed would parallel a mixed cultural understanding. In essence, I thought if I could learn about First Nations culture, I would automatically become more aware of being Métis by incorporating those teachings into my largely Euro-centric experiences. In hindsight I did not realize the colonial intentions of appropriating these knowledges or that borrowing these traditions was re-enacting cultural appropriation. Norris (2011) explains a similar appropriation of "rites of passage" ceremonies by environmental education programs and in many respects I was involved both personally and professionally in an inappropriate use of these ceremonies. That said, through these mistakes I have gained incredible respect for the First Nations cultures that I've been exposed to. The resilience shown by First Nations peoples is astounding. I did not always feel comfortable in engaging with First Nations culture but I am consistently humbled by the generosity and friendship of the Native people I've met throughout my life.

One example of this learning is when a friend and coworker invited me to participate in a sweat lodge ceremony that was being run by the Aboriginal liaison of the wilderness treatment organization. This was meant to be a healing ceremony for participants of the program and staff were encouraged to attend in support. During university I had heard of sweat lodge ceremonies but had always assumed they were exclusive to First Nations peoples. At the time I was happy to respect the boundaries because I was uncertain and nervous about participating. When my friend invited me, I

politely declined. He insisted that I attend and told me that while some sweat lodges are exclusive, this one, in particular, was open to employees in an effort to expose them to a new level of cultural understanding between participants and facilitators. In essence, it was important that staff knew the ways in which Aboriginal participants in their program were healing and that this healing might also help non-Aboriginal people struggling in their own lives. He went on to say that the ceremony might also help me with my cultural misunderstandings and ambivalence. The Elder who facilitated the lodge told us "everyone needs healing." Sarah Brown describes her first sweat lodge this way:

> *I was really, really nervous about it and I had been told that it was really important that I didn't leave unless it was in between the rounds. I had a lot of the anxiety that I'm sure people feel in their first sweat lodge. But right from the start I was just mesmerized by the Elder.*

I was similarly nervous. I was scared that I would have to leave if the heat became too overwhelming, fearful that I was doing something disrespectful by attending without knowing the protocols beforehand. However, when the ceremony began I felt both euphoric and overwhelmed at once. I didn't expect it to be so emotionally powerful. This sweat was intended to teach; we were gently given lessons of the protocols throughout the ceremony and we learned about the cleansing power of sweat lodges. I won't claim that I am knowledgeable about these teachings; I certainly do not know the stories and songs that are a part of these ceremonies and I still only attend a sweat when I am invited. I do know what I felt during the ceremony and what the implications have been for me. It was here that I began to settle more deeply into a spiritual practice and connection; I began to see myself in a new way. I felt as though I was being offered language that

finally spoke unexpressed ways of knowing within me. Prior to this, I had actively resisted any spiritual ethos, afterward, I sincerely felt open to the beauty of spirituality and traditional knowledges.

Shortly after my first sweat lodge experience, I was travelling Southbound on a secondary Albertan highway. It was dark and cold in the middle of January. I'd had a great deal of trouble getting out of town that evening and was driving fast to make up the extra time. Along the most isolated section of road, two large moose ran out from a steep ditch immediately in front of my vehicle. I had almost no time to react as I swerved into the empty oncoming lane. If I had steered the other direction into the ditch, I would have careened down a large hill with nobody in sight. As I swerved, both moose turned quickly and I narrowly clipped the hind leg of the lead moose with the front fender of my small, late 90's sedan. Immediately, I pulled over to the side of the road and looked back to see the silhouette of the injured animal in the yellow glow of oncoming headlights. My entire body was trembling; I was crying. Fear, relief, and adrenaline pulsed through every one of my veins and arteries. In that moment I have never felt more connected to another living being and I sincerely felt a deep relational spirituality emerge from within me. That was the first time I felt a relationship with all beings, which in turn engendered a spiritual practice centred upon relationships. An existential question emerged from that experience: How does being connected with all living things influence how I interpret my experiences with this land and all beings within and upon it? This question still informs the basis for my spiritual practice as a human being.

I later led a canoe trip down the North Saskatchewan River with a group of youth from Nordegg to Rocky Mountain House Alberta. Our take out point was at the Rocky

Mountain House National Historic Site. It was mid-week in Late July so there were no interpretive programs running and we were free to explore the grounds. For the first time, I saw a life-sized Red River Cart and stood inside the perimeter of what had been a Hudson's Bay Company Fort. I didn't realize then that I was standing in the exact place where William Shanks Gladstone built York boats for the HBC. Reflecting on this now, I have difficulty describing the feeling of sharing intergenerational space. To have walked upon and to feel so connected with the exact land my ancestors lived on is empowering to say the least. *"It's an amazing feeling to be able to close your eyes and picture those people there and the things that they did."* – Kayla.

By this time I had reverted to a more cautious level of identifying as Métis. Because of my experience at the MNA office and luncheon I kept my Métis identity largely hidden as I sought out more information. I wanted to know more about who I was. I continued to attend Blackfoot ceremonies and asked Elders about Métis peoples, I did not realize the inappropriateness of my asking; they had very little to say because they weren't Métis. My understanding is that Cree influence on Métis culture is much more common in Alberta, in some Métis communities many people even speak Cree, have Cree relatives and may even hold Cree Treaty status. Kayla reflects that *"I've worked in Aboriginal communities mostly with the Dene and the Beaver, I've watched them play hand games and I've done round dancing and tea dancing and I've never felt 'I'm Métis' because I'm doing others peoples traditions*." I similarly felt somewhat distant in my cultural endeavors with Blackfoot peoples as I tried to find some sense of belonging as a Métis person. While much of First Nations culture, ceremony, and worldview resonate deeply with me, I am not First Nations; I am not Cree.

As I learned the story of my Métis ancestors and engaged with Métis peoples I wanted to remain aware and cautious about appropriating cultural practices that should be restricted from me. I began learning an intentional practice of recognition as I engaged in First Nations ceremonies and through friends who are actively involved in deconstructing colonial narratives as well as narratives of cultural appropriation. This process of understanding my ancestry was happening alongside a process of learning about the injustices of colonization and eventually sparked the thought process behind this study. So began my process of decolonization which Sarah Brown describes as:

> *…trying as best as you can within a colonial system… to try to think outside of colonial narratives with some awareness of the fact that that was not the truth… and also, trying to free ourselves of all the institutionalized thinking and oppression that came out of those lies.*

Thus, I began reading; books and journals seemed the safest avenue toward understanding more about the intersections of cultural appropriation, reclaiming identity, decolonization and Métis culture because I could learn by critically engaging with literature and exploring ideas from publically available sources that freely offered up information on Aboriginal knowledges. Frances reported a similar process of coming to know: *"I really started getting interested in reading and getting into the history and everything. It was fascinating, I've read many books on the Métis Nation."*

Around the time of Idle No More, I used every avenue possible to gain more information on relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian settlers. I referenced CBC's 8th Fire documentary (Kinew, 2012), the ReVision quest satirical radio show (Dennis, 2010; 2012), websites about Métis culture such as the Gabriel Dumont

institute[7], Métis Nation of Alberta Website[8], and blogs about contemporary Métis insights (Vowel, 2011) which provided links to language classes, current events and other cultural reference points. I found that there was comparatively little information on Métis peoples in the greater conversations about Aboriginal peoples; sometimes, I felt that the Métis were an afterthought or somehow assumed to be covered by speaking about First Nations people. It was difficult to find information on Métis cultures in particular; it certainly wasn't taught to me during school. Until 2012 I didn't grasp the idea that Métis peoples identified with a unique and separate culture (Andersen, 2014) than that of First Nations peoples. I didn't know about jigging or fiddling, I didn't know about Michif language, York boats or any other Métis influenced cultural reference points.

> *...we hear of fiddling and jigging and all sorts of things like that but in terms of what the life might have been like at the time and how that evolved its all just bits and pieces to me. Politically I know that the rights of the Métis were never recognized in the way that even some other First Nations peoples experienced not being recognized and marginalized as a fact. I know it's been a struggle to find land and it continues to be to this day.* – Kayla

Information about Métis peoples trickled into my awareness and I was exhilarated by Idle No More rallies and about the larger conversations centering social justice for Aboriginal peoples. During the beginning of Idle No More, I overheard conversations about allied support from non-Aboriginals and the solidarity that must be reached, because we are all affected by the policies of colonial governments. One rally cry during

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[7] visit the Gabriel Dumont Institute at https://gdins.org
[8] http://www.albertametis.com/MNAHome/Home.aspx

Idle No More was “we are all treaty people.” I also heard conversations regarding concerns that allies would only remain supportive of the movement until environmental policy changed to a comfortable level at which point they would leave in the same way some feminists decelerated once a comfortable level of equality was given to the more privileged sectors of the movement (hooks, 2000). Thus I was finding intersections between feminism, class, and other forms of oppression during the early stages of my decolonization.

I didn’t want Idle No More to be a forgotten cause, abandoned at the first sign of progress. This was my very first taste of social justice movements. I became hypersensitive to oppressive language and the actions of others. I was overwhelmed with the complexities within and between stories. This was the first time I was able to articulate a feeling I had long had; namely, that many stories can be true at once, even if they contradict each other. For example, I exist both as a beneficiary and as a victim of colonialism. I felt the need to learn more, to expand my vocabulary and find new ways to voice my internal knowings.

Thomas King’s *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012) helped me to disrupt assumptions that I’d had about historical narratives between settlers and Aboriginal peoples. Julian Norris (2011), Emily Root (2010), and Tracy Friedel (2011) wrote about the environmental education/ outdoor experiential education industry and how it is sometimes complicit in irresponsible, colonial narratives that re-enforce and re-enact subjugation of Aboriginal peoples. As a practitioner of outdoor experiential and environmental education, I realized my own complicity in colonial narratives and appropriative practices. For example using a smudging ceremony to welcome a student

into a program without having a solid understanding of the significance of that ceremony displayed a level of ignorance on my part. Confronting such actions and my complicity in this type of appropriation as a privileged "white" person was a first time experience for me as an outdoor educator.

In essence, I began to understand that I move through this world in a way that is disproportionately easier than others and simultaneously obstructs equal privileges for Indigenous and Aboriginal (as well as many other) peoples because of my skin colour, gender identity, class status, sexual orientation and settler status. Here, amid a community of critical minds in an outdoor education program, I began to understand these intersections and the importance of decolonization, spirituality, connection to land, and the work I was doing as an outdoor environmental educator and youth worker. I could not ignore the call to action yet I simultaneously felt paralyzed by guilt, shame, and tacit participation in a colonial system.

During my time at this outdoor education program, I experienced many unsettled and upsetting emotions. I was immersed in an existential identity crisis where I was not sure how to deal with my participation in colonialism. For example, I wanted to believe that everyone was equal rather than confront the reality that social inequalities do exist for many people. I had no idea how to reconstruct my worldview within the context of these ongoing fractures. I didn't know how to reconcile the feelings that were tangling-up my previously clear cut ideas of being Métis and of being a person in Canada.

Almost as an omen of support, I received a Métis sash that year from my Auntie Lee. My new sash was an incredible gift and rekindled a deep feeling of acceptance and belonging that I'd felt when I'd first put my MNA application together; this simple act of

generosity inspired me to move forward and embrace the complex and uncomfortable feelings that were lingering around me.

Decolonization for me has been an emotional journey. There have been times of anger, profound sadness, and hopelessness but also times of great satisfaction. In many scenarios I felt the need to tell people what their colonial errors were, how they continued to inadvertently oppress people because I was insecure with my own contributions to the colonial narratives being played out in my life. This finger pointing took a huge amount of energy as well as refracted the focus off my own complicity as a colonizer. I have had many conversations with myself regarding my accusatory behaviour and how it reflects my own insecurities. This relates to LittleBear's (2000) concept of non-interference, an Aboriginal mentorship sensibility, which describes how each person's pathway to healing, is theirs and one must not intervene with another's journey. Thus, it is my responsibility to work toward my own decolonization processes rather than to tell other people what they should be doing. Bit by bit, information and cultural knowledges were coming into my life prompting new critical ideas and questions, which added to the complexity of my stories. Sarah Pocklington states *"To be born Indian is to be born political."*

While reading and discovering these ideas, I re-engaged in conversations that had started in earnest while I collected my MNA application. These conversations were primarily with my Grandmother. When I visited Lethbridge, I took time to sit with Nana Barb and ask questions about our family. Nana shared my affinity for speaking about our relatives and would often boast about folks with whom we had familial ties. I always remember her storytelling growing up, she was always so proud of her family. Our chats

would be long and circular; Nana would interrupt herself when she remembered something about someone from Pincher Creek and another story would begin. As I sat and looked through documents, she would show me pictures of Marie Samat Vandal and Harriet Leblanc. I revisited these pictures and documents over and over again, I still felt safe in my Grandmother's presence: she offered me a solace in my identity. Kayla mentions

> *...it feels great because you're able to say "this is, this is legitimate, there's proof – people have been writing about it." I can point to my ancestors name on the list ... it's there it's on the Internet, and my mom's telling me that ...*

Those visits with Nana Barb made me feel more accepted than I ever had before, as Nana wanted me to love myself as human being not only as a Métis person.

In January of 2013, after nearly forgetting about my application, I received a letter from the Métis Nation of Alberta requesting additional supportive documents for my Métis membership. They wanted me to produce a birth registration, birth certificate or baptismal certificate for my Nana Kay and Nana Barb that included their parent's names. Once again my heart fell out of my chest into my stomach. I had been told that my Nana Kay's birth certificate was lost in a fire at the Church near Pincher Creek long ago. When she was applying for her pension my family members couldn't find written proof of her birth. She was considered country-born which meant that there was no definitive birth date. We had always celebrated her birthday on June 10 and ascribed the year 1910 to her birth. Disheartened, I put away my application once again because I had no idea how to collect these documents. Shortly afterward, on another visit with my Nana Barb she gave me a copy of her baptismal certificate, which she had obtained from her church after

finding out it would assist my application. I was back on track and only needed one more piece of paper to "prove" Métis membership. Obtaining validation through membership still feels like a difficult insecurity for me. Additionally, My Uncle Billy's membership card has expired because when the MNA changed policy they requested his long form birth certificate, which he hasn't submitted. He often jokes "I was Métis in 2003 but I guess I'm not anymore." This jest by my Uncle reflects Richardson's (2004) statement that jokes are a way for people to engage in the process of identifying as Métis.

I have not yet acquired my Métis membership card in the province of Alberta due to these roadblocks; however, I have not been denied membership. In fact, the MNA staff has been supportive at every intersection in assisting with my application. Despite the many barriers to membership I remain hopeful and patient. I am also aware that I may not receive membership and have tried to find a sense of groundedness in my identity in other ways. Sarah Pocklington reminded me "*Quite frankly right now I don't care about the card at all. I don't need the card to know who I am."*

With the saga of achieving membership stalled again, I began to search for new ways to connect with the culture that were less bureaucratic and more experiential. I continued reading books and websites about Métis people and culture. I specifically became interested in Aboriginal languages. As I engaged with academic literature I learned that language could be a powerful reflection of culture because language and culture influence and inform each other (Simpson, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Initially, I wanted to learn the Métis language of Michif, however after I found out my ancestors had spoken Cree I began to look into avenues to learn some Plains Cree (Nehiyâw) language. Frances similarly articulated an interest in learning, stating: "*I'd love to learn Cree, I've*

got Cree dictionaries and everything!" I love the fact that my ancestors spoke an Indigenous language. I remain cautious about appropriation but I wonder if learning Cree would connect me more closely with my ancestry and thus my culture. Frances also added what I considered another complication in our story "*Old Glad …spoke Gaelic. Also one that spoke Gaelic was his son, William… He was an interpreter for the Northwest Mounted Police, and I think it was five languages that he spoke…"* Not only did my ancestors live in a uniquely Métis culture, they may have also been poly-cultural, engaging with a milieu of Scottish, Western and Métis cultures.

I have been very fortunate to attend many Aboriginal events, including Pow-Wows, and Rodeos where Native people gather to celebrate culture and relationships together. Often at these events when people address a crowd and speak they begin in a very systematic and intentional way. By first introducing themselves, where they come from, who their family is, and sometimes what clan they are from (if they recognize a clan system), they situate themselves in relationship to all others. Sarah Brown shared her thoughts on this type of introduction:

> *…the way that First Nations people often greet me or greet people in general. Where they start by introducing themselves in their own language and they introduce their lineage in that way… That's always an experience that's really emotional for me.*

I have always been amazed by this display of relational knowledge (Wilson, 2001; 2008). At one event I attended, a prominent Métis man addressed the crowd entirely in the Nehiyâw (Cree) language. Normally, a translation in English follows this introduction however on this occasion he spoke for approximately ten minutes in fluent Cree and then

sat down. I was floored. The realization that we were on traditional Nehiyâw territory and that the language is a big part of that land was demonstrated so clearly by his actions. For me, the connection between language, culture and land emerged as they also all inform each other (Alfred, 2013; Wilson, 2001; 2008). Wilson (2008) speaks about a co-creation of language and culture in his writing especially referencing the connection to Cree culture and relational language where everything centres on relationships. Still, sometimes I feel insecure about the idea of learning Nehiyâw language because I don't always know what an acceptable reciprocity would be for that type of knowledge.

In the autumn of 2013, I began my Masters degree at Brock University in Southern Ontario. While I was engaged in a course on methodologies I began reading texts on specific Aboriginal ways of knowing; I found these teachings resonant. Texts and articles by Indigenous and Métis scholars were very inspiring and offered pathways to explore research in uniquely Aboriginal ways thus uncovering more of who I am as a person. Sarah Pocklington had a similar experience:

> *I was going to the University of Calgary and I took a course in anthropology on people of the North… So it was at that point that I did a lot of soul searching and learning about identification or identity; who I am.*

Over the course of those early months in graduate school, I dove deeper into literature about and by Aboriginal peoples regarding their unique struggles with colonialisms in Canada. I was now focusing my search on more academic literature rather than works of fiction, online articles and blogs.

During this time, I continued to experience all levels of emotion. When I read about the expropriation of land by settlers I became angry, I learned about individual and

collective stories of residential school trauma with deep, visceral sadness. I struggled to grasp the depth and pervasiveness of colonial damage in Canada and abroad. As I read more however, I began to witness strength of Indigenous peoples within the literature; demonstrated acts of resilience from Aboriginal peoples were evident both within the academy and outside of it. Despite all the damage and de-legitimization, strong voices for change remain solidified in literature and art created by Aboriginal peoples (Short, 2011; Turner, 2010).

During the beginning months of graduate school, I began taking violin lessons so that I might learn some of the Métis fiddling style. By this time, I was far removed both geographically and emotionally from my home place. In many ways, I felt distant from myself as I learned new pieces of my identities. I hoped that, upon my return home to Alberta, I would be able to integrate these new practices into a more settled sense of self by utilizing my longing to connect with place that I'd held since I before I moved away. I felt especially distant from my family and I was worried that I would lose the newly formed cultural connections I'd worked so hard to manifest with my Nana, Uncle, and Auntie.

Fiddling seemed like a unique way to engage with the culture while I began the important work of looking to the past. After I watched "Medicine fiddle" (Loukinen & Janek, 1991) I was inspired to learn to play and I began to listen to the songs of the Métis. "The Red River Jig," "Old John MacNeil" and "The Devils Waltz" played repeatedly in my apartment and filled the rooms with intergenerational nostalgia. I later learned that my Nana Barb also used to play fiddle because she loved the music so much when she was young however I don't know if she ever learned any Métis songs. All of this cultural

knowledge was inspiring but didn't seem to bring me any closer to a vindicated sense of being Métis. I began to unintentionally revisit the deep insecurities that lay within me. Was I Métis enough to do this research?

While reading texts and articles by Taiaiake Alfred & Jeff Corntassel (2005), Leanne Simpson (2004), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and other Indigenous scholars many emotions bubbled up about the authenticity of my story and I once again began to feel less stable in my identity. Until that point I had been able to internally identify and choose when and where I told people that I was Métis. By engaging in writing a thesis on my decolonizing process and my family heritage I had jumped into a vulnerability that I was deeply uncertain about. My insecurity in my identity stemmed from not growing up with the culture woven with my desire to reconnect with my history and to decolonize my story. Sarah Pocklington explains a similar feeling *"when I was in my late twenties… the whole identity thing really bothered me, I felt really insecure."* Similarly I would oscillate between feeling grounded and feeling like a complete fraud. Because of my perceived illegitimacy, I attempted to find ways of being somehow "more Métis;" I was floundering for some tangible sense of identity. During the summer of 2014 I returned home to pursue connection with my culture. I wanted to speak with Elders, to spend time surrounded by Métis people and to sit on Métis lands.

Place and land hold cultural significance in Aboriginal ways of knowing (Alfred, 2013; MacDougall, 2006). I was very fortunate to continue my cultural learning at home. I felt an indescribable draw back to Pincher Creek and Southern Alberta. My desire to invest time and energy building community there with my Métis community has developed as I meet more Métis people from that area. *"I think the only other thing that I*

will say is that community acceptance is really the key" – Sarah Pocklington.

Although not widely recognized as having a large Métis population, Pincher Creek and the surrounding area hosts an annual Métis festival. One of the most influential events for me over the summer was attending this festival put on by the Pincher Creek Métis Local 1880. Here, a collection of my relations, other local Métis families and settlers congregated to celebrate Métis culture in Southern Alberta. I was immersed in culture there for a weekend.

> *I've been aware of the fact that the more time I spend with people who are either Native or Métis, the more I get introduced to that part of me and that part of my culture and the more connected I am to it* – Sarah Brown.

I registered in every activity at the festival: jigging, bannock making, beading, Red River cart rides, hatchet throwing, archery and a four hour fiddling workshop. Métis fiddling has developed as a unique style that holds within it cultural knowledges and worldview of Métis peoples (Loukinen & Janek, 1991). Sarah Pocklington told me that *"from doing my research into Aboriginal music in Canada … Métis people have been always been very political through their music."* I had never been immersed in such a palpable display of culture and to be surrounded by the silhouettes of familiar Mountains birthed within me a sense of belonging I hadn't quite felt before. I was home.

Over the course of the weekend I learned three new fiddle songs including one from the old days of Fort Edmonton called "The Devils Waltz." I learned by carefully watching and listening rather than having the notes written down. This, I was told by my instructor, was in the oral tradition of Métis peoples. Sarah Pocklington shared a similar teaching, *"… this is generalized – but a very traditional way of teaching and of learning*

is to, watch listen and then do." I had heard that song many times before but hadn't realized that Old Glad may have also heard it during his summers at Fort Edmonton so long ago. Making these small connections through the generations and within Métis culture felt wonderful, as though each newly illuminated strand helped position me into the complexity of my ancestry, one piece at a time. I wanted more of this feeling, there was immediacy to my actions and over the course of the weekend I wanted so badly to accelerate years of non-belonging. Part of that learning was learning to sit and listen.

At the festival I also had a taste of a specific type of humour, which is often part of Aboriginal cultures (Alfred, 2013). I sat with a group of women to learn how to bead and we were making small medicine bag necklaces. I was the only male sitting at the beading table as the women patiently taught me how to wax the thread and draw out a pattern on a small piece of leather. I sat and listened to them tell stories and joke with each other. One woman said "you know we used to do this with moose scrotums, but they're harder to come by nowadays" and then looked over at me and said "Oh I bet he wants to leave now!" The table erupted in laughter. This small ribbing was a way to make me feel at home and accepted, I continued to bead in embarrassment with flushed red cheeks. For the rest of the festival I danced, ate, fiddled, and celebrated in the late June sun to the point of exhaustion. My over-zealousness overcame my self-awareness and I collapsed at the end of the second day. My body was so overwhelmed that I became ill and couldn't get out of my tent to participate in the last evening of the festival. I was angry with myself for being so foolish but the lesson I'd received was of patience. Instead of trying to acquire all the cultural knowledge at once, perhaps it was better to learn gradually and build each piece into my own experience?

Over the course of my identification processes I have wanted so badly to belong, to be Métis in a hurry. I have had thoughts about how I can perform culturally in ways so that I can feel more authentic. I felt, and sometimes still feel, the need to be vindicated in my identity as quickly as possible so I can carry on doing other work. This path of immediacy consistently leads me astray whenever I try too hard to know the culture too quickly. I sometimes get caught trying to enact a more individualized and egocentric desire to "own" my cultural identity rather than allow myself the process of learning. I still have much more work to do in this area and feel that this process will be life-long. An example of my impatience happened while I was speaking to participants for this study; my questions often focused specifically how they knew they were Métis. I unintentionally asked questions that conformed to my personal benchmarks of what the "real" Métis culture is. Thus by trying to explore cultural authenticity I was once again inadvertently re-enacting colonial narratives:

> *Frances: My dad did a jigging exhibition … Every time they had a dance at Drywood, He did his Jigging thing and my Uncle played the violin for the dances I mean, these weren't all Métis people these were people from all over the district. So we were pretty well accepted.*
>
> *Me: …but there were Métis songs and Métis [right?]...*
>
> *Frances: They would be all the square dances and all Métis music, which everybody at that day and age were dancing to.*

As I continue to engage with Métis culture and confront my ambivalence I am learning to sit in the discomfort of not knowing. I am also beginning to learn some appropriate cultural protocols and how to behave in ways that are consistent with

teachings I've received from Elders and others. A Métis Elder once told me not to be in such a hurry, there is a lot to learn, but also a lot of time to learn it.

I found it especially wonderful to speak to Frances because she is an Elder in the community of my ancestry and we share distant relatives. She was able to confirm information about my family and offer me new insight into the stories of our relatives. For me, our conversations have demonstrated the far-reaching familial bonds so common in Aboriginal cultures (MacDougall, 2006; Simpson, 2004). I feel very accepted by Frances and indeed all the participants of this study, which allows me to accept myself in a different way and also to continue with my identification work.

* * *

I had a dream in December 2014 where I was sitting with my Great-Grandmother (Nana-Kay) in my childhood home; she was having coffee with my parents and my Grandmother (Nana Barb). I told her something I can't recall and she whispered a Nehiyâw (Cree) word to me to poke fun at someone else in my family. We laughed together with my Nana Barb knowing that we were the only three who could understand the joke. When I woke up I felt a very grounded sense of being Métis and indeed of being a person. I thought "It doesn't matter if people don't recognize me as Métis, my Auntie is Métis and my Great Grandmother was Métis and so was my Grandmother, the ancestry is there! It's there! It is part of me regardless of my disconnection from culture and the colour of my skin this is legitimately part of me and that does not change because of other people." This conversation with myself was my first sense of truly accepting myself as Aboriginal while simultaneously letting go of the need to be recognized. In that moment I didn't feel the need to attend ceremonies or wear a sash as some form of proof. In that

moment I felt no behaviour would change the amount of Métis I am in the same way that no amount of speaking Spanish, for example, could make me Spanish. That moment might be similar to Frances' assertion that "*I think that's inherent in you if you're Métis, if you noticed, its just in you and it just starts coming out. You start wantin' to find out about it."* and Sarah Brown recalls *"I have this strong connection to my ancestry … I feel like I do have some medicine that's been passed on … and some knowings and some skills and awareness … from that lineage."*

Richard Wagamese (2009) speaks about being a good person first, then a good man, and then a good Aboriginal. In this way, I have begun a new piece of my journey away from merely decolonizing and into Indigenizing, which centres Aboriginal stories rather than focusing on the colonial aspects of life (Korteweg & Russel, 2012). As Sarah Pocklington states:

> *… what I'm saying is that somehow it's not about the other … it's about regaining who we are, remembering who we are; remembering our history remembering our culture…our worldview… our ceremonies and all of the things that make us the peoples that we are.*

After my dream I felt that being a good person and remembering who I am is more important to me than being recognized as Métis. I hope I can learn to manifest that feeling in moments each day as I continue to embrace myself and learn more about my culture.

Interlude

Throughout this project I have attempted to deliberately intertwine two methodologies that focus on the development, and exploration of stories. I intentionally designed each piece of this research to employ what I have come to understand as a Métis sensibility. For example using relational ethics to consider what impact this work may have beyond human participants embodies a focus on the larger implications of future and past generations. I have now come to an intersection, as many Aboriginal researchers before me have (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008), where academic protocols dictate I must articulate some of the meanings I gained through this process in the form of a discussion.

I would very much prefer that readers absorb whatever teachings they feel they have gained from the above chapters through their own experiences and use those stories to develop their own meanings on which to base further spiritual, emotional, physical and mental practices that they see fit. In short, I cannot give you the lessons of this writing; you as the reader are significantly more equipped to incorporate what you have learned through your reading than I could possibly articulate. I am resistant to the process of telling you what to take away from this because you as the recipient of this story can choose to act in a way that is ethical, loving and respectful.

That said, I believe it has been a valuable process for me to put down in words what I myself have gained from this process and what meanings I have come to know so far on my journey of identification and decolonization.

Chapter Six: "I Believe This To Be True"

"I believe this to be true" is a phrase employed by Nêhiyâw (Cree) scholar Winona Stevenson (2000, p. 19) and Margaret Kovach (2009, p. 111) to position the contextual knowledges of their research. By identifying themselves in their work, Kovach and Stevenson display the living nature of their knowledges; in essence, truths they explore are necessarily subjective and have the capacity to grow and change. I have adopted this phrase here, as the title to my sixth and final chapter, in order to position and contextualize my own understandings gained through this process and to honour the lives of my knowledges.

This chapter positions my present research study within larger conversations of decolonization, Métis identification, and connections to land based on the stories I have both heard and told. Rather than having definitive conclusions or direct recommendations, I have intentionally left parts of this chapter open to the interpretations of the reader; however, I focus on meanings that I have interpreted throughout this process and offer some directions readers may take (Kovach, 2009). In this way, I am actively employing the concept of noninterference discussed by LittleBear (2000) alongside explications of lessons I've learned. Thus, I once again employ a literary métissage to articulate meaning from the process and writing of this research.

I designed this project with four research questions in mind, which I summarize below. In this discussion I revisit these questions in order to reflect back on my exploratory process and elucidate lessons derived from the stories told here.

This chapter will: a) explore lessons I've learned from the familial artifacts and conversations I had with the four Métis women in this study; b) build upon these lessons

to articulate meanings developed from engaging in a decolonization praxis through a variety of perspectives; c) explore my extensive reading of literature about, by and for Métis and other Aboriginal peoples as an avenue to both develop a critical interpretation of Métis culture and confront my ambivalence in identification; and finally, d) I offer insights on future directions for myself as well as other Métis peoples in decolonization and identification processes.

I present these in a chronological process of meaning-making based on those four central queries. Employing the inductive and emergent processes of data analysis and results, which include both direct relevance to the research questions and evolving responses, I elucidate meaning here around the four research questions. This process is an effort to articulate the meanings in a clear structured manner, similar to that of Wilson's (2008) book, which uses academic language first, then a more succinct writing style to explain complex concepts of identification. I employ paraphrases of the research questions as chapter headings. I deem this important because I needed some structure to encapsulate the meanings that arose for myself and for the participants and returning to the research questions themselves provides one appropriate framework to achieve this. Those headings are as follows: a) artifacts and conversations influencing my identification; b) considering decolonization; c) situating myself in Indigenous literature; and d) future directions for decolonization and identification. Each heading contains subheadings to outline the key findings of the respective question.

The overall purpose of this Chapter is to integrate my learnings with the research literature in an attempt to expand upon a body of emerging knowledge. I will thus be including select quotes and paraphrases from my journals and my conversations with

participants and (re)integrating those with relevant literature. I view this discussion as a platform to expand upon conversations about Métis peoples – conversations that go beyond rights and existence as peoples toward a decolonizing and contextualized conception of Métisness.

Artifacts and Conversations Influencing my Identification

In this section, I will summarize three key findings: a) feelings of groundedness and self-acceptance; b) feelings of illegitimacy; and c) feelings of ambivalence that emerged from the first research question – Does exploring my family's historical artifacts and interacting with Métis people, facilitate an understanding of my Aboriginality? If so, how and in what ways? All of these feelings are associated with my process of identification.

Groundedness and self-acceptance.

I had to work backwards from the present into the past through artifacts to begin reclamation of my Métis identity. I found the photographs particularly grounding because I was able to see the faces of my ancestors and imagine what their lives may have been like. For example I state that, *"My cultural link is felt most strongly through stories and photographs of my ancestors."* Similarly, Sarah Brown reflected on the picture of her Grandmother's moccasins that tell a familial story. Donald (2012) explains that artifacts can be viewed in a variety of ways and an important process of gleaning information is to rebuild stories from artifacts that depart from monolithic Eurocentric stories. For example, Frances informed me that William Shanks Gladstone had done all the handwriting on scrip applications for Harriet Leblanc and Marie Vandal because these two women mostly spoke Cree and could not write in English. Additionally the incident

where Harriet saved Old Glad when she used an axe to cut the hand of a gunman attacking him astonished me. A portrait of incredibly strong, no-nonsense women began to develop in my mind; women who deserve a more prominent and heralded position in history. Centering Métis women's stories is a position similarly held by MacKinnon (2012) in her writings about Marie Rose Delorme Smith. I took great pleasure in imagining the tenacity and strength of these women and feel great pride in being associated with them through my ancestry. Not all participants knew the stories of the women in their ancestry, which I would have liked to explore further with them.

Old Glad's diary was the artifact that I connected with the most because it provided me with a story that geographically articulated how my Métis family came to exist in Southwestern Alberta. The link between my ancestors' narratives and my own is perhaps why I get so enthusiastic about listening to these stories over and over again. As Frances states: "*I think that's inherent in you if you're Métis, if you noticed, It's just in you and it just starts coming out. You start wantin' to find out about it."* Similarly, Richardson's (2004) mother "knew it in her heart" (p. 33). I feel a similar knowing in my heart also and yet I am grateful to have access to these documents should I need them in the future. These artifacts remain the most effective anchor in my process of self-acceptance as a Métis person. Conversations with participants assisted me in exploring self-acceptance by having them explain their own grounding processes. For example when Frances states, *"I know where I belong now and I'm proud of it. Totally proud to be a Métis. They have a terrific culture and a terrific history and everything, so it's wonderful to be a Métis."*

I adopted Restoule's (2000) concept of identifying or identification to articulate a

process rather than a single identity, which connotes a static or objective state. Thus, by amalgamating stories from the artifacts and conversations with participants I was able to develop a more holistic and nuanced understanding of my own Métis identification process. Not all participants mentioned use of artifacts as a way to connect with their ancestry however most did refer to documentation that they had received or knew of to facilitate their journey. For example, when Kayla explains that once she received *"that little bit of information"* she was able to *"get her feet on the ground."*

My identification process emerges throughout my writing because I was, and in many ways am still, struggling with accepting this identity. Thus I alternated between accepting and questioning myself as Métis. I returned to these artifacts as a way of reminding myself that my past is legitimate. In this way I feel resonance to Anderson's (2000) aforementioned quote: "part of being Native is feeling like we aren't" (p. 27) as a descriptive anecdote for my process. Similarly Kayla's hesitations articulate my own *"As an individual, there are some quiet moments where I feel grounded in my identity, but I struggle a lot with actually owning the identity in a general sense."*

Illegitimacy.

Feelings of illegitimacy are evident throughout this thesis in the type of questions I asked participants, reflecting upon this, I noted: *"while I was speaking to participants for this study; my questions focused specifically how they knew they were Métis. I unintentionally asked questions that conformed to my personal benchmarks of what the 'real' Métis culture is."* I also articulate my ambivalence through statements like: *"I attempted to find ways of being somehow more Métis; I was floundering for some tangible sense of identity."* These statements about illegitimacy were sharply contrasted

with statements such as: *"I had never been immersed in such a palpable display of culture and to be surrounded by the silhouettes of familiar Mountains birthed within me a sense of belonging I hadn't quite felt before. I was home."* Thus, conversations with participants and internal conversations with myself offered platforms to understand my emerging identification. This process of confronting feelings of illegitimacy is reflective of Richardson's (2004) conclusions that to situate oneself in a Métis identity, it is necessary to engage in this discomfort.

Kayla states that she has never been in a community of all Métis people to contextualize her experiences and that she is fearful of comparing herself to others in such a community because they might know more about the culture than her. I certainly share this fear with Kayla and consistently find myself comparing my knowledge of culture to other Métis peoples. Turner (2010) suggests that this is common among Métis peoples who are new to identification. Thus it has become evident to me that I exist in a constant state of flux between wanting to accept myself as a Métis person and not wanting to be perceived as taking cultural practices without due consent; Sarah Brown articulates

> *...some people are trying to find their place in their community and other people have more of an existential identity crisis. I'm aware of the fact that my whole life I felt a need to know "who am I exactly?"*

Feelings of illegitimacy were most clearly articulated during discussions of Métis membership cards; for example, I regularly refer to my process of attempting to gain membership: *"I have not yet acquired my Métis membership card in the province of Alberta due to these roadblocks."* In contrast, Sarah Pocklington states: "*Quite frankly*

right now I don't care about the card at all. I don't need the card to know who I am." Her statement aligns with Green's (2011) sentiment "don't tell us who we are not" (p. 166) and Turner's (2010) assertion that receiving her membership card did not immediately solve the feelings of illegitimacy she felt.

Self-acceptance has indeed been the most difficult piece of the identification journey for me and is consistent with Richardson's (2004) process of moving from not knowing to knowing. Specifically I would position myself between the stages of "…coming out of the closet, validation of the self, renaming the self and recreating the self through connecting with cultural stories" (p. 32). I have also learned to embrace the uncertainty I feel by sitting in the discomfort of not knowing and trusting the processes that I am undertaking. One Métis acquaintance told me that at some point I would have to choose to identify as Métis or not and stop the flip-flopping. However I am still sometimes paralyzed by feelings of illegitimacy and use the artifacts and conversations to ground me in a historical Métis connection.

Ambivalence.

A natural pendulum emerged between feeling grounded and feelings of illegitimacy for both participants and myself through our identification processes. Each participant in this study described points of uncertainty and half the participants stated they felt a presently grounded sense of identity during the interview in contrast to previous points in their lives. For example, Sarah Pocklington states: "*We have to get to a place though, and I have, and you will, where you know what you know. You identify as what you identify that doesn't come from outside, that comes from in here" [touches heart]*. Sarah's sentiment reflects Turner's (2010) assertion that people should be allowed

to choose how they identify as Métis. Her sentiment is further reflected by Green (2011) when she states: "One danger of an authentication formula, designed for the purpose of colonial legal and administrative clarity, is that it would subject Métis, in all our diversity, to an external legitimation process" (p. 166). That said the younger participants in this study including myself still exist in an ambivalent state of not quite knowing or feeling entirely certain of their present identity. Not all participants would fit neatly into the description given by Andersen (2014) and others of who a Métis person is however, all participants self-identify as Métis. Turner (2010) suggests that it is more dangerous to culturally exclude people than it is to risk inauthentic assertions of Métis, especially for those who are new to identification. All participants and I are indeed in different points along this journey. Kayla states that she is just beginning to identify while Frances doesn't appear to question her identity at all and has called herself Métis or Halfbreed her entire life; however, each participant articulated some ambivalence in her life around what being Métis means to her, as did I. In the next section I discuss how these conversations about identity led to discussions about decolonization.

Considering Decolonization

This section revisits the second research question: What is my emergent understanding of decolonization and how does it contribute to my conception of my Aboriginality? By cataloging and folding in the influences of literature, journals, artifacts and conversations, I present my current understandings of decolonization in the form of five decolonizing avenues I participate in and/or learned through this research endeavour. They are: a) confronting colour, passing and privilege; b) recognizing traditional lands; c) building relationships; d) language and music as cultural praxis; and e) decolonizing from

Eurocentric starting points.

Confronting colour, passing and privilege.

The first step I took toward acknowledging my white privilege was during Idle No More in 2012. Until that time I had only a vague understanding of the inequalities faced by Aboriginal peoples on this land. Thus, the first challenge in my decolonization was to begin to acknowledge my complicity in this inequality, to begin to accept that I had undeserved privileges based on my skin colour and to confront my specific actions that precipitated injustices for Aboriginal peoples. All participants in this study have, in some way or another, struggled with the complexity of identifying culturally as Métis while having light skin. For example, Sarah Brown states: "*Another complexity in my story is around skin colour. When people say to me 'you may have Métis lineage but your life had white privilege…that effects me."* Kayla similarly speaks about her hesitancy to self identify in some situations lest she be called out for being inauthentic:

> *I think a lot of that comes from the way that I look because … I don't want anyone to look at me and say "you're not Métis, what are you talking about?" So I just kind of gauge how safe I feel in each moment*.

I also discuss ambivalence about the colour of my skin, I write:

> *I am aware of all the extra hardship that goes along with having darker skin, being more recognizably Aboriginal. I know I have privileges in society because of my white skin and yet I sometimes wish I didn't feel so out of place within my identity.*

One of Richardson's (2004) participants describes white privilege: "…basically I've always been in the White world … I have gotten the advantages of … being White … if I

was darker, or looked more Native, it could have been a lot more different" (p. 126). Both Turner (2010) and Richardson (2004; 2006) explain these examples of confronting privilege as tactical responses to avoiding racism. They go on to say that the covert racism faced by some light skinned Métis peoples exists due, in part, to the concept of "passing" as white or European. For example, internally identifying as Métis and feeling uncertain how to approach racist comments toward Métis or other Aboriginal peoples when in groups of white people, especially groups whom we may like, may cause discomfort for Métis peoples (Turner, 2010). Sarah Brown speaks specifically about having the white privilege to *"let a racist judgment hang"* rather than speak against it. Sarah Pocklington adds that: "*There's also a lot of status First Nations people who have blue eyes and blonde hair so its not as simple as skin colour for me."*

Most participants in this study described a sense of association and/or kinship with darker First Nations peoples. Sarah Brown states: *"Despite my Irish roots I had always been really drawn to Native American spirituality"* and Frances remarks that: "*When I was young, we were so close to these reserves around here that we were totally associated with the Indians all the time and they used to just tell us that we had Indian blood in us."* These statements represent relationally-based resistances by participants to the systemic racism faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada and are congruent with Richardson's (2006) tactical approaches of Métis peoples resisting racism.

In an effort to understand the racialization of Aboriginal peoples, I read sections of the Indian act during this study and was astounded by the racism saturating its pages. Understanding the racist undertones of settler culture is one way to begin confronting and disrupting my complicity in settler colonialism. Frances exemplifies her resistance to

colonial superiority by stating: *"They talk about their genocide in other countries, what the heck were they doing over here!?"* These acts of resistance are contextualized within the construction of the Canadian state, which is guilty of both creating legitimizing discourse for the oppression of Aboriginal peoples (Green 2011), and expropriating Indigenous lands (Alfred, 2013).

Recognizing traditional lands.

During Idle No More, I began to think more about whose traditional territory I was on in an effort to recognize, day-to-day, how people's histories are woven deeply with the land, which is something I often took for granted. This realization was a starting point for the conversations about connection to land that I shared with participants. Each participant mentions the connection of her Indigenous ancestors to a geographical space. For example: Kayla shares her connection with Penetanguishene while Frances and I feel an association to the Drywood Creek district of Southern Alberta. Additionally I have been to many of the places that William Gladstone spoke about in his writing such as Rocky Mountain House and so his writing elicited a deep connection to those places for me. The feeling of this connection is hard to articulate but no less profound. Turner (2010) suggests that some identification processes are indescribable and must be experienced.

In contrast to Kayla, Frances and myself, Sarah Pocklington is unsure of the exact region her Cree ancestors are from in Quebec and I am curious if knowing and visiting the land creates a context for understanding ancestry in different ways. Certainly many scholars speak of the importance of being on traditional lands as a way to embody the essence of being Indigenous (Alfred, 2013; Simpson, 2004; Smith, 2012). This process is

confounding for Métis peoples due to the complex nature of Métis homelands; in essence, Métis peoples occupied the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples during their ethnogenesis which begs the question: What is the traditional territory of the Métis? All participants in this study are residents of Alberta and are aware of the Métis settlements in Alberta however none of the participants had lived as an active member in one of those communities. Métis scholar Friedel (2011) reminds us that Aboriginal people are still on their lands even in urban centres. Thus, complex understandings emerge relevant to what and where traditional lands for Métis people might be. In my mind, the compartmentalization of spaces "for" Aboriginal peoples in an effort to claim authenticity, is a colonizing concept. Kayla explains that she *"I started to learn and gain more information about the Métis peoples that were around Red River in Manitoba. I was told that there's some sort of difference and that maybe people in Ontario wouldn't be considered the true Métis."*

As an act of resistance to colonial suppression, Indigenous artist Aaron Carapella (2015) created a tribal nations map using both colloquial Western names and the names of people's territories in their own languages (Carapella, 2015); however, Métis lands are not included in Carapella's maps although the Métis are recognized by Andersen (2014) as Indigenous peoples. As a practice of decolonization, recognizing the complex and dynamic histories of the land demands critical and careful consideration. It is not enough to denounce the state by saying "I am on Blackfoot territory;" it is also necessary to go further and understand the complexities of what that territory might mean to the Blackfoot peoples, and what a respectful relationship with that land looks like. As Simpson (2004) states "In present times environmental destruction of Indigenous

territories facilitated by state governments and instituted by large multinational corporations continues to remove Indigenous Peoples from the land and prevent Indigenous Peoples from *living our knowledge* [emphasis added] (p. 378)."

Furthermore, as a Métis person, recognizing the existence of Métis peoples on Indigenous lands means to recognize the complexity that Métis peoples add to the stories of those lands because they emerged post-contact but pre-colonialism (Andersen, 2014). These complexities regarding land and decolonization certainly warrant further study.

Frances speaks about the Gladstone homesteads: *"we're trying to locate those graves because then we could say 'well, gee, our people are buried here.' I think we should have a land base here because of the amount of Métis that were in this country."* As I continue to explore new places I seek out people who are connected to the lands I visit and ask them about their homelands and explore the complexities within the stories that land holds. To that end, building relationships with Indigenous peoples has become another practice I have found useful as I engage in my own self-decolonization.

Building relationships.

In conversations and time spent with Aboriginal peoples both as part of this study and before it I have witnessed a deep sense of familial closeness among my Aboriginal friends and relations. For example, two of the participants and I learned of our Métis family histories from an extended family member be it an Uncle (Sarah Brown), Second - Cousin (Kayla) or Auntie (me). These kinship ties to culture are supported by literature written by numerous Indigenous peoples (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Andersen, 2014; Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 2009; Goodwill and McKormick, 2012; MacDougall, 2006; and Richardson 2004). These authors all centre familial and

community cohesion as foundational for Indigenous (and Métis) resurgence. I believe the present individualist Western culture separates kinship ties among Aboriginal peoples that may serve as survival strategies (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Relationships between and among family members, which are so palpable in Aboriginal communities, can offer avenues for Métis peoples and myself to engage with each other. For example, Sarah Brown reports that:

> *...it wasn't until a few years later when I met with my Uncle in Kamloops and asked him if there was any chance we had some Native blood. He said "yeah, why don't you sit down and I'll tell you your story."*

Here, Sarah articulates the support from kinship ties in her identification process.

Support from family members and friends in the form of stories, insights, and critical questions during this research process was similarly helpful for me in understanding my story and thinking about Métis identities. Root (2010), Richardson, (2004) and Turner (2010) recommend developing relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to facilitate decolonization processes as a way to develop a supportive community in which to articulate thoughts and emotions that emerge. Through this research I was fortunate to build relationships with the participants and I continue to maintain contact with most of them. For their part, participants in my study are happy to co-create these relationships as well; for example, Sarah Brown reported: *"that was a super memorable conversation and I look forward to having more with you."*

For me, kinship ties do not necessarily end with direct relatives but extend beyond to include my ancestors and future generations. Additionally, communities where ideas and identities can be celebrated, constructed and developed continue to be an

important place to live out my Métis identity. As Sarah Pocklington states: *"I think that sense of community and sense of belonging has become what's important. That's the part that matters. Because I'm already who I am.*" In order to work within these communities I have also begun to develop language that aligns with my Aboriginal ways of knowing.

Language and music as cultural praxis.

Learning the language of my ancestors became an extension of developing familial ties with them throughout this project. Because of my interest in speaking words correctly, and because many of my Métis ancestors spoke a Nehiyâw language I developed a curiosity about Indigenous languages especially with regard to how they inform cultural understandings. Frances and Sarah Pocklington especially inspire me to continue my learning through their stories of either learning or hoping to learn a Nehiyâw language: *"I'd actually love to learn Cree but I don't speak it fluently"* – Frances. Wilson (2001; 2008) suggests that Nehiyâw languages and other Indigenous languages are necessarily relational and by beginning to learn them, people can situate themselves within Aboriginal ways of knowing because these knowledges are reflected through the act of speaking.

This idea is further affirmed by Sherry-Kirk's (2014) work on reclaiming Ojibway language as a decolonizing pathway. Additionally, Leanne Simpson writes "Indigenous languages are critical to the recovery and continuance of Indigenous Knowledge because their structure and composition is designed to articulate Indigenous worldviews, values, conceptualizations, and knowledge" (2004, p. 377). Sarah Brown states: *"I certainly recognize the power of language and the connection between language and culture and when possible, its fine for me to learn the words but mostly just to interact in the contexts*

that I do with First Nations people." That said, from a decolonizing perspective, I wonder if it is appropriate for me to learn an Indigenous language, even one spoken by my ancestors given the problems associated with colonization? What are the consequences of non-Natives speaking Indigenous languages? Sarah Pocklington's Father learned Cree in a university setting and used it to act as an advocate for Métis peoples throughout Alberta. My awareness of these uncertainties demands a constant critical analysis of the implications of my learning; in essence, simply learning a language without also engaging intentionally in a decolonizing sensibility (Donald, 2012) would be, in my view problematic. As Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi (2009) state, the "processes of restorying and truth-telling are not effective without some larger community-centered, decolonizing actions behind them" (p. 139). If I am to continue to learn a Nehiyâw language, I must undertake this process as an effort in decolonization not simply for the ability to speak but to further locate myself within my ancestry and culture, which includes engaging in other avenues as well.

Dancing, jigging and fiddling are common ways to engage with Métis culture (Loukinen & Janek, 1991; Freeman & Moran, 2008, Quick, 2008). Fiddling has been perhaps my most enjoyable avenue toward decolonization, I state: *"Fiddling seemed like a unique way to engage with the culture while I began the important work of looking to the past."* Playing and listening to fiddle music settles my heart in such a way that I am intrinsically and continuously drawn into the sounds and feelings of the music. Sarah Pocklington describes her association between her identity and her music as an integral piece of her political Métis identification, claiming: *"I have always been very political, through my music and otherwise. Part of that probably comes from who I am as a person*

but I was also raised by very political parents."

Learning fiddle can be seen as a parallel process to identification as a Métis person. The processes between fiddling and decolonization are so intertwined for me that each time I pick up my fiddle I feel experientially engaged in a decolonization practice. Moreover, the act of fiddling centres Métis ways of knowing, and therefore, provides a platform to simultaneously dismantle colonial narratives and affirm Métis knowledges through art. Lashua and Fox (2006) state that "They were able to survive by connecting to each other, providing support, and expressing their own views through their music" (p. 278), referring to Aboriginal youth's rap music. In this manner, music can assist in decolonizing identities. This artistic centering of Métis knowledge is similar to Short's (2011) autoethnographic work, in which she interprets Métis artists' works as avenues to develop her own understanding of contemporary Métis culture. Thus, I consider playing the fiddle a form of Indigenist, or more specifically Métis-centric knowledges and an exceptional avenue toward decolonization.

Decolonizing from Eurocentric starting points.

I began to learn fiddle by first engaging in traditional violin lessons, In my vignette I state: "*I also began taking violin lessons so that I might learn some of the Métis fiddling style."* These lessons were in a distinctly Western learning environment; however, I believe that this framework provided a foundation on which I could build further knowledge of fiddling. Beginning in a Western setting and moving toward traditional knowledge prompted me to ask the question: Is it possible to use Western avenues and literature as a starting point to decolonization? Given the amount of Indigenist and decolonizing literature by Indigenous scholars, universities appear to

emerge as spaces of resistance and strength for Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples. Sarah Brown describes her first interaction with Indigenous literature:

> *I ended up doing my undergraduate thesis on "Black Elk Speaks", which was my introduction to the complexity around bridging cultural gaps and also my introduction to reading people like Vine Deloria, Warren Churchill and learning about the American Indian Movement. I began to really sink my teeth into the complexities around appropriation and colonization*.

Iseke-Barnes (2003), Gaudry and Hancock (2012), and Simpson (2004) suggest that there are numerous Indigenous scholars who have found ways of decolonizing academic settings. Sarah Pocklington relates that: *"My dad would teach us words in Cree but both my dad and my sister took Cree at University."* Similarly, Frances repeatedly refers to books that she uses in an effort to learn more about plant medicines, family histories and the Métis Nation. In my own experience, uncertainties regarding Métis cultural protocols were so paralyzing that I wanted to begin my decolonization process in ways that both explored my vulnerabilities and managed my risk of appropriation, and re-enacting colonialism. Thus, my process of decolonization began intrinsically as Alfred and Corntassel (2005) suggest.

By engaging with Aboriginal literature during graduate school – which demanded reading with a critical lens and interpreting literature in ways that acknowledged the complexity of Aboriginal ways of knowing – I was able to develop understandings in a space where I felt comfortable. This process of critical reflexivity facilitated both my writing and my experiential engagement with Métis culture as I was required to constantly remain alert and employ rigorous scrutiny of any information that may re-

enforce rather than challenge colonial narratives. For example, I write: *"Texts and articles by Indigenous and Métis scholars were very inspiring and offered pathways to explore research in uniquely Aboriginal ways thus uncovering more of who I am as a person."* My sentiment of learning first through academic means is similar to Gaudry and Hancock's (2012) recommendations to decolonize academic institutions by first learning the colonial system and then finding ways of disrupting it with decolonizing sensibilities.

Situating Myself in Indigenous Literature

In developing this project I sought to use literature to elucidate a clearer vision of how to understand Métis cultures from a variety of perspectives. This section articulates the knowledges I gained through literature on, by and for Aboriginal (specifically Métis) peoples to discuss the question: How might understandings of Aboriginality, gained through literature and living as a culturally ambivalent Métis person influence my knowledges, attitudes and beliefs about Métis culture and my identity? This section expands on three ideas developed with participants from this question: a) Multiplicity in Métis identities; b) Lateral violence; and c) Resisting definitions and embracing stories.

Multiplicity in Métis identities.

At the outset of this project, I quickly learned that multiple perspectives of Métis identities were evident throughout the literature – perspectives about who can and cannot be considered Métis based on different definitions. The collection of essays edited by Lischke and McNab (2007) demonstrates a variability among Métis identities. Within this study, each participant occupies and articulates a slightly different manifestation of Métis identification. For example, Sarah Brown traces her ancestry to the Tuscarora tribe and African American slaves, Kayla with Great Lakes Métis and French ancestry, Frances

with Plains Cree and Scottish and Sarah Pocklington with Cree from Quebec and Scottish roots.

One of the most commonly relied upon tropes of Métis identities is that they are primarily a mixed race and culture (Andersen, 2014). Indeed, most participants in this study recognize, at least the initial, mix between early Europeans and First Nations as the catalyst to Métis ethnogenesis while simultaneously understanding Métis to be a unique set of cultures, separate from First Nations and European cultures. Frances describes conflations with Métis identity in Southern Alberta:

> *As Métis got popular, the Indians all wanted Métis cards; they said, "Well, y'know we're Native and we're white too" ... We always had to explain to them this is how they figure that out. They're mixed bloods but they're not Métis.*

Andersen (2014) submits that "mixedness" is a problematic central identifier of Métis peoples in Canadian discourse; for example, he identifies the influences of the census and court proceedings on Métis claims to legitimacy and how these have perpetuated the myth that Métis peoples are somehow less Native. As I encountered new literature about Métis peoples, the multiple perspectives offered me, influenced how I was interpreting my own identity. Andersen's (2014) stance that the Métis identities are exclusive to those peoples who are associated with the traditional territory around Red River feels isolating to me despite being a well-built argument. I resonate with Andersen's problematizing of mixedness however I struggle to reconcile the exclusive nature of his position. Thus, I found it particularly difficult to navigate multiple scholarly opinions with my own while writing my story. Indeed, entire volumes articulate the mixedness of Métis peoples (see Lischke & McNab, 2007; for example) while Andersen

(2014) flatly refutes it. The literature on Métis identities is riddled with boundaries regarding who or what can and cannot be considered Métis. Frances states:

> *We had a lot of trouble with that because we had people - and we still do - who came from Quebec. They were French Canadians they lived exactly like the Métis did, they considered themselves Métis and yet they couldn't get those cards. I don't know, I sometimes wish they would just change that whole thing.*

As I encountered a nuanced perception of the complexity of Métis identities in the literature, I came to agree with Andersen (2014) that a new perspective regarding Métis identities is necessary and must move away from discourse that centres mixedness as a main identifier. Indeed, all cultures can be considered to be mixed in some regard (Andersen, 2014; Easthope, 1998).

How can we as Aboriginal peoples and settlers navigate these multiple understandings of identification? Perhaps embracing the complexity of Métis identities is a way to move away from colonial and categorical ideas of culture? Participants did not weigh in as heavily about literature on, by and for Métis peoples beyond books such as Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (both Frances and Sarah Pocklington mentioned this book in conversation). In retrospect, I am curious about what participants' thoughts may have been on academic conceptions of Métis identities within literature and would have liked to discuss this further with them. Participants may have spent considerable time pondering their identities without encountering scholars who may have served to further delegitimize Métis rights and identities in their writing (Gaudry & Hancock, 2012).

Lateral violence.

Lateral violence can be defined as the aggression between oppressed groups

where the conditions created by the oppressor – in this case a settler-colonial state – mitigate any resistance from the oppressed. Thus, rather than resisting oppression, lateral violence is directed across groups and re-enforces existing power relationships between oppressed and oppressor (McCormick & Wong, 2006). During this project, I consistently felt fear that I would be labeled inauthentic or a wannabe by other Métis peoples or by non-Aboriginals:

> *As I write this narrative I feel vulnerable about naming my ambivalence and uncertainty. I have now opened myself up in text to scrutiny by those who would name me a wannabe (Richardson, 2006) or state that I do not belong to a Métis identity.*

Most participants in this study reflected on situations where they felt insecure, or uncertain about their Métis identification based on fear of not being recognized as Métis by other Aboriginal peoples. This is a common fear especially for lighter skinned Métis peoples (Richardson, 2006; Turner, 2010). For example Sarah Brown describes going to reserves and "feeling" white until friends introduce her as Métis. Similarly, Kayla states she often avoids outwardly identifying herself for fear she will be delegitimized. These acts of resistance may be responses to lateral violence (Turner, 2010).

Not only are these fears evident in experiences of the participants but also I encountered similar feelings while reading relevant literature, some of it (perhaps inadvertently) delegitimizing Métis identities, sometimes from Métis authors themselves. For example reading about debates between "big M" and "little m" Métis as a means to compartmentalize who can be considered "true" Métis (Andersen, 2014). These debates also manifested themselves as conversations within my family and with participants.

Sarah Pocklington states that after she'd finished teaching at a university she intentionally disengaged from discussions about identity politics because it was too overwhelming and not helpful for her.

Resisting definitions and embracing stories.

"In Canada today, many Indigenous people have embraced the Canadian government's label of 'Aboriginal'… this identity is purely a state construction that is instrumental to the state's attempt to gradually subsume Indigenous existences into its own constitutional system" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 598). During a conversation with Sarah Brown I state:

> *... there's a preferred or very strongly reinforced narrative and then there are many other narratives: Métis narratives and Haudenosaunee narratives and Blackfoot Narratives and Black and Queer and all these narratives that don't get the same airtime so to speak. Particularly relating to Aboriginal cultures because of how we [as settlers] exist on this land and to be able to reconcile the disparity in privilege between white people and Aboriginal people we feel we have to adhere to these narratives.*

The idea that Aboriginal peoples must behave, look and act certain ways is a colonial endeavour that removes their agency and is sometimes inadvertently perpetuated by Aboriginal people themselves (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Sarah Pocklington gave the example of her friend who was speaking emphatically during a job interview held by an older Aboriginal person who said

> *"well, I'm a little concerned, because she's talking an awful lot," which my friend does when she's nervous… That didn't fit in with this other persons idea of what*

an Aboriginal person is like …That just really shocked me …it took me back to this whole concept of the noble savage, … You behave in these very stereotypical ways and if you don't, if you aren't like that, well then you can't be Aboriginal... To me institutionalized racism and all those things are there.

Sarah's story was validating for me as I worked through this study to develop my identification and through my conversation with her I felt less bound to one particular way of being. This idea is further reflected in the words of Baker (2005), who states:

> These stories, which are often concerned with those of us who had different stories about our families and what it means to be Native in the world, show me that there is no one way, or right way, to be Native in the world. Even my father's denial of his Indianess was his way of being Native in a world where it was so completely unsafe to be Native. While all of our stories of Indianess may be different they are still about being Native in the world today (p. 114-115).

Both participants and scholars articulate the difficulties in self-acceptance thus creating space to step into different conceptions of identification for Métis peoples. Too often Aboriginal peoples have not been given choice in developing their own identities (Turner, 2010).

In summary, the literature written about Métis peoples (whether or not written by Métis peoples) presents significant complexities. Through this research I have begun to see not only identities but all experiences as inevitably complex, contextual and nuanced. For example I recognize that each person I meet is an infinitely complex arrangement of influences, ideas, experiences and perceptions all of which inform them in each moment and interaction. Thus I echo Turner's (2010) recommendation that agency should be

given to the individual for her identification while also understanding that this process is fluid and ever changing.

Future Directions for Decolonization and Identification

This final section builds upon the three previous sections to suggest future directions of decolonization thus responding to the question: How can I employ lessons or insights gained through conversations, personal reflections and artifacts to educate and inform other people who are curious about their Métis identities? I submit the following six recommendations to readers for decolonization: a) Influence on identification for Métis peoples; b) Reciprocity; c) Developing a relationship with land; d) Decolonizing our diets; e) Re-conceptualizing urban landscapes; and f) Recognizing cultural significance of land.

Influences on identification for Métis peoples.

I set a lofty goal at the beginning of this research endeavor, which was to assist others in their Métis identification as a way to offer reciprocity toward the assistance I received throughout my journey. Although I was uncertain about my ability to meet this goal, during one conversation I had the following exchange with Sarah Brown:

B: Have you looked through any records like in Saskatchewan to find this stuff beyond the package that your Uncle gave you?

S: No, I haven't but definitely talking to you now it makes me curious to do that…

B: So do you, and if so how do you, participate in a decolonization process in your own life?

S: That's a great question that every Canadian should ask themselves.

For me, Sarah's sentiments display some consideration of her own processes and help me

to feel that I have the capacity to offer some directions for other Métis people just as I have been influenced by Métis scholars and indeed by the participants in this study.

Kayla states she hopes to engage with her family to continue her process of learning about her ancestry after engaging in our conversation. I am grateful to have shared ideas and tactics in decolonization with each one of these participants. These conversations are examples of the embodiment of what Richardson (2004) calls "a psychological Métis homeland… a moveable feast and can be invoked wherever Métis people gather, spend time together, share stories, food, cultural activities and generally celebrate Métis identity together" (p. 56). By developing this psychological homeland, it is my hope that participants in this study may engage in a continued process of coming to know their histories, which may provide strength in their identification. As Turner (2010) suggests: "the difficulty in navigating with a new Métis identity, points to the importance for having Métis spaces where Métis people can gather and learn about themselves and each other" (p. 165). I hope to continue to foster relationships with participants in an effort to deepen the Métis spaces we have co-created. To do this I must offer support where possible to participants as they continue their journeys of decolonization and identification.

Reciprocity.

In order to engage responsibly within Aboriginal methodologies, some level of giving back to those who assist me is essential to complete the cycle of giving (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This practice of reciprocity can take the form of offering tobacco, offering print (coloured fabric) (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012) and many other reciprocal agreements within any relationship. During this study, I offered each

participant a collection of medicines I harvested with a friend using appropriate traditional harvesting protocols. I also gave each participant a small amount of tobacco for her contribution to my knowledges. Frances received the gift by saying: *"yes, that is the proper way to do it."* Other participants responded with deep gratitude when receiving this offering. I would have liked to explore ideas of reciprocity further with participants with regard to their experiences of coming to know themselves. For example all participants recounted stories of receiving mentorship from family members and/or Elders of some kind. Sarah Brown relates part of her identification process in sharing: *"Part of my understanding of my identity and my lineage has often come from meeting with other people that I consider to be both Elders and intuitives."*

While relating these experiences, participants did not specifically mention reciprocal practices but rather hinted at their profound gratitude for the teachings they'd received. I am interested in the practice of reciprocity; however, I know teaching about protocols such as reciprocity are often learned experientially rather than explicitly stated (Turner, 2010) which might explain the omissions by participants. Sarah Pocklington reflects: *"Part of what I've learned is there's not a lot of question asking in Aboriginal cultures. One of the ways to engage and learn is actually to observe."* This recognition of experience-based knowledges is consistent with Turner's (2010) statement:

> I cannot capture the sense and power of ceremony, the participation and guidance of spirits, the deeply felt sense of intergenerational connection, and the intergenerational trauma, in a way that makes sense in a dissertation. These things are experiential and felt, rather than thought.

I found my practice of reciprocity to be a great learning experience for me while

engaging with Aboriginal knowledges. I practiced reciprocity by offering participants gifts but also by encountering different understandings of reciprocal protocols during the various Métis events I attended during this study. This learning manifests in my writing, I reflect: *"Still, sometimes I feel insecure about the idea of learning Nehiyâw language because I don't always know what an acceptable reciprocity would be for that type of knowledge."* In the same spirit of reciprocity toward language I also hope to develop a relationship with land.

Developing a relationship with land.

Beyond my earlier recommendation of recognizing the complex stories of land, I believe that developing a relationship with land is a vital component of my self-decolonization process. Similarly, all participants in this study articulated their developing and emotional connection between their cultural identity and spending time on land. Conceptualizing cultural relationship with land is perhaps best articulated by Sarah Brown's question: *"what is a direct experience on the land that isn't culturally interpreted?"* Frances speaks about her intricate knowledge of the area around Twin Butte and Drywood Creek where she came to know the wildflowers, and spent all of her time riding horses all over that country; many of her stories related to spending time on the same land as her ancestors. Similarly, Kayla reflects on her transformative experiences visiting the Penetanguishene region as a child and how that shapes her ancestral connections still:

> *Because I was from the city, it was one of the experiences as a kid that made me really feel connected to nature. Both my mother and father had relatives there… I'm not as familiar with the story on my dad's side but I've always wondered what*

brought them there.

Thus, as demonstrated by the Métis peoples in this study developing cultural identification practice involves reconsideration of our relationships to land. Many Aboriginal scholars likewise articulate that the complexities of Aboriginal identities are necessarily tied to land in some regard (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Lowan(-Trudeau), 2009; Simpson, 2004). Indeed, the intersections of Aboriginal epistemologies and environmental education warranted an entire volume in 2012 from the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*. With these intersections between identity and land in mind, I want to continue to work to build relationships with land in these contexts especially in my practice as an outdoor educator in an effort to avoid re-enacting colonial narratives within outdoor environmental education (Korteweg & Russell, 2012; Simpson, 2004). Similarly, environmental/outdoor Métis educators and scholars Friedel (2011) and Lowan-Trudeau (2012; 2014; 2015b) recommend avenues to engage in a critical practice of decolonization as in their pedagogical practices. Thus, a question to guide my future environmental/outdoor educative practice might be: how can I develop a pedagogy from knowledges I've encountered throughout this study to translate the complexities of identification and connection to land in my future educational experiences? I hope to further develop an understanding of the implications of my relationship to land on my cultural practice as well as my identification process. Additionally, I believe connection to land can also be understood as connection to other beings that live upon that land and our relationship to them.

Decolonizing my diet.

Frances was the only participant to associate her cultural identity with her diet,

stating: "*We even ate different than everyone else; we lived on elk meat and didn't have a garden or anything like that. Dad was a hunter and we ate an awful lot of elk…"* I too am interested in the intersections between Aboriginal connection to land and diet-based cultural practices. Perhaps because Frances was the only participant who grew up and lives in a rural environment she associates her "difference" with a wild game-based diet. I however, reflect extensively on the connection between land, diet, and the hardships endured by the Métis peoples as well as opportunities to decolonize using food as a starting point. Richardson (2004) repeatedly mentions Métis people gathering together with food and sharing in cultural identity. Because Métis food sources came under threat at the hands of settlers during the pemmican wars when Métis were forbidden from the sale of their traditional food (Barter, 2007), I wonder about reclaiming food and its associated potential for gathering as an avenue to decolonize. Andersen (2014) for example, recounts his experience at a "Halfbreed Ball" held by Maria Campbell: "which included a ten-course meal of modern riffs on traditional Métis food, as well as Métis singing, performing and a fashion exhibition showcasing Métis material culture" (p. 3). His description of this event provides one example of the collective feast, which Richardson (2004) offers as a space of Métis resurgence.

Similarly, *Nîhîthawâk* (Woodland Cree) scholar Herman Michell (2009) describes berry picking for example as an essential community building practice for *Nîhîthawâk Ithînîwak* (Cree people) which helps to develop an "interconnectedness" (p. 66) with the land. The reciprocal offering of tobacco while collecting medicines and engaging in respectful, traditional hunting techniques offer some opportunities to "decolonize [our] diets" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005 p. 613). Thus, one avenue for me to continue

decolonizing would be to assist in what ways I am able the Métis peoples in Southern Alberta re-instate their hunting/ harvesting rights on crown lands, which were removed in 2007 (Andersen, 2014). Additionally, connecting traditional and contemporary Métis foods to a decolonizing practice is an area I would have liked to spend more time discussing with participants. I believe intersections between food and gathering spaces might offer an opportunity for future research endeavours. That said, I feel it is important to recognize that limiting my scope to only revisiting traditional practices may blind me to contemporary conceptions of Métis cultures. For example, the tendency to think that rural based Aboriginal people are somehow more authentic is a misguided and essentialist assumption (Lawrence, 2004).

Re-conceptualizing urban landscapes.

With the exception of Frances, all participants including myself live in urban settings and associate their connection to land with more rural or wilderness settings. For example, Sarah Pocklington speaks about the cabin she visited as a child, Kayla speaks about her connection to Penetang and I go into great depth about my connection to the land surrounding Waterton Lakes National park as a central piece to my identification. All that said, scholars call for a re-conception of urban landscapes as spaces for cultural practice and thus identification.

There is an idea that being in a city somehow necessarily precludes one from being connected to land. Alfred (2013), Friedel (2011) and Lowan-Trudeau (2014) suggest otherwise; simply because the expropriation and dispossession of land has taken place by industrialization from a settler state, does not remove the necessity to connect with that land. Avenues must be created by which engagement with urban landscapes

offer arenas for cultural practice thus dismantling the idea of pristine wilderness – a misnomer itself – as the only site for connection to land to occur for Aboriginal peoples.

One incredible example of connecting culture to urban landscapes is the proposed development of Kihciy Askiy (Sacred Earth) as a site for Aboriginal peoples to express themselves spiritually within the urban setting of Monto [Edmonton, Alberta] (Cardinal & Faber, 2011, p. 4). Of course certain areas of land are especially important for Aboriginal peoples; Métis peoples in the West recognize Batoche, Saskatchewan for example as the site where the 1885 resistance culminated and as a site of cultural significance.

Recognizing cultural significance of land.

Connecting to a culturally significant site is a very important piece of cultural identification for Aboriginal peoples (Alfred, 2013; Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Lowan-Trudeau, 2009; Richardson, 2006; Simpson, 2004). Batoche is one of few spaces where Métis people have been celebrating their culture in yearly festivals. Frances reported:

> *Batoche was very emotional, I really realized how very important it was and how wonderful it was that it was preserved. We even had the papers with who's buried every place down there. The Church with a bullet hole in it and everything and then you realize that it was almost like being there when it was happening with the rifle pits and everything. I was so happy I went down there.*

I believe there is a dearth of research exploring the overlapping stories of specific lands, Aboriginal peoples, spiritual practices and national narratives. These connections to place, spirituality and traditional knowledges are interwoven to the rights of Aboriginal peoples and are often under threat by settler legislations and land expropriation (Alfred,

2013). Sarah Brown states:

> *... when these First Nations people introduced me to different cultural interpretations of the land and metaphors like "you're walking on the bones of your ancestors" or about mother earth as having flesh and the water being her blood, that really opened up a different understanding of identity and spirituality for me.*

Wall (2009) explores the connections among cultural identification, spirituality and leisure pursuits at another large Métis gathering: the pilgrimage to Lac St. Anne in central Alberta. In Alfred's (2013) presentation he speaks about nefarious ways that land has been dispossessed from Indigenous peoples for example by the government providing permits for extractive industry to mine land without the consent of Indigenous peoples on that land. In addition to legislative malpractice, there are socially constructed barriers to land that must be somehow dismantled. Frances spoke of the hegemony by settlers in Southwestern Alberta that reduce the freedom to access areas of the country she had grown so used to:

> *I've had free run of this whole country my whole life, which is really nice. Nobody ever stopped me from riding on the land everybody just knew that was me out there riding. So I never ever got stopped but now that the acreages are coming in. They've locked their gates; the put up a good fence and they put a lock on the gate. So the riding isn't that good around this country anymore.*

Lowan-Trudeau (2009; 2014; 2015a) offers pathways which utilize both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing to connect people to the land where they reside, helping to reconcile a strictly adversarial (i.e. Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous) mentality. He states

that ecological métissage is an avenue where Indigenous knowledges of relational connection are aligned with Western concepts of deep ecology and bioregionalism, which foster a similar connection to other living beings.

That said, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have resisted the dispossession of their lands for centuries while offering solutions that challenge ideas of absolute ownership of land by private individuals or companies (Alfred, 2013). Perhaps consultation with Aboriginal peoples in how best to respect the land is an available direction for both settlers and myself to engage with moving forward. Again, Frances recommends rather than restrict use that people "*use respect … there are signs that you can put on your gate … They don't lock any gates or anything they just have a 'use respect' sign."*

Closing

To summarize, Métis identification is a complex process as evidenced both through literature on Métis peoples and through the descriptions offered by participants in this study. I've followed recommendations by Métis scholars Donald (2012), Richardson (2004), and Turner (2010) to engage in a decolonizing methodological framework to answer questions regarding identity reclamation and decolonization practices. Specifically, I employed an Indigenous métissage framework and utilized autoethnographic methods for this research study. There are a variety of ways in which I used both the Indigenous métissage framework and autoethnographic influences to assist in the development and recounting of my identification process. These include examining artifacts, speaking with other Métis peoples, and reviewing literature on Aboriginal and Métis identification and decolonization.

I hope to use the knowledges gained during this project to deepen and facilitate

my practice as an outdoor environmental educator by reflecting on the pedagogical influences I have encountered from the study participants and literature and from the findings that emerged. I also hope to continue a practice of reciprocity in my relationships with participants and all future relationships with human and non-human beings. I believe that reciprocity in research offers an opportunity for further consideration. Similarly, developing a relationship with the land as researchers both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal may develop avenues to bridge the gap between Western and Indigenous knowledges (Lowan(-Trudeau), 2011).

Moving forward, I hope to volunteer some of my time with Métis Local 1880 in Pincher Creek. Because this community was the site of many of my ancestors' stories, I would like to develop a further relationship with the Métis peoples of the area as well as foster a deeper connection to that land.

I hope to develop communities of Métis and Aboriginal peoples to further invest in my cultural identification as well as to facilitate the connections to land and traditions that I feel have been distant in my life, in essence to hear more stories. I hope that my writing has provided a methodological platform for those who may wish to combine autoethnographic methods while remaining ethically conscious of their Aboriginal teachings and thus combining Indigenous methodologies into their research (Kovach, 2009). Also I hope that my discussion around decolonization can be used to facilitate others' own decolonizing journeys. Finally, I hope to disseminate these knowledges in my non-academic life so that conversations about identification, decolonization and reciprocal relationships with all beings may be shared with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that I have come to know and love.

In Cree scholar Winona Stevenson's (2000) introduction, she offers these words relayed to her by her friend, which I hope hold some truth for me in the next stage of this journey (substituting, of course, Métis for Cree).

> You'll be far from home studying with all kinds of different people, learning new ways of learning. And after you have learned these new ways, when you come home, that's when you will be ready to take up your Cree education. Your formal Cree education will begin then, and the Old People will be waiting for you. (p. 2)

To that end, I now move from a cerebral and academic space to a place of informed practice; a physical, emotional, mental and spiritual place where I listen to the Old ones, spend time on the land, and work from a grounded and heart-centered starting point. From here, I walk toward engaging complexities of identification with my relations in an effort to explore how these lessons can build empathy, capacity, and relationship.

Kitatamihin (Thank-you).

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Appendix 1: Ethics Clearance Form

Brock University
Research Ethics Office
Tel: 905-688-5550 ext. 3035
Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE:	8/19/2014		
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	BREUNIG, Mary - Recreation and Leisure Studies		
FILE:	14-015 - BREUNIG		
TYPE:	Masters Thesis/Project	STUDENT:	Bob Montgomery
		SUPERVISOR:	Mary Breunig

TITLE: Standing near the lake: Reflections of my Metis identity

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW Expiry Date: 8/29/2015

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 8/19/2014 to 8/29/2015.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 8/29/2015. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved: J. Frijters

Jan Frijters, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

Appendix 2: Letter of Invitation

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Brock University
Niagara Region
500 Glenridge Ave.
St. Catharines, ON
L2S 3A1 Canada
T 905-688-5550, 3259
F 905-984-4843

brocku.ca

Letter of Invitation

Title of Study: Standing near the lake: Reflections of my Métis identity

Student Principal Investigator: Bob Montgomery, Graduate Student, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University

Principal Investigator: Dr. Mary Breunig Associate Professor, Recreation and Leisure Studies, Brock University

I, **Bob Montgomery,** invite you to participate in a research project entitled **Standing near the Lake: Reflections on my Métis Identity**

The purpose of this research project is to reflect on my personal understandings of Métis culture and identity through interviews with other Métis peoples. A primary research question for this study is: Does exploring my family historical artifacts and interacting with Métis people, facilitate an understanding of my Aboriginality? If so, how and in what ways? Your participation in this research will allow me to reflect on my Métis identity by providing the context of your story as a self-identified Métis person. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to **engage in a 1-1.5 hour interview focused on Métis cultural identity and your experiences as a Métis person.** Interviews may take place in person or over the phone and audio recorded with your consent.

This research should benefit Métis peoples who are interested in their personal genealogy, history and culture as well as contributing to research about and by Métis people in academic settings.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

_____

Bob Montgomery
Graduate Student
bob.montgomery@brocku.ca

Dr. Mary Breunig
1(905)-688-5550 ext 5387
Associate Professor
mbreunig@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board **[file number 14-015].**

Appendix 3: Letter of Informed Consent

Faculty of Applied Health Sciences
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies

Brock University
Niagara Region
500 Glenridge Ave.
St. Catharines, ON
L2S 3A1 Canada
T 905-688-5550, 3259
F 905-984-4843

brocku.ca

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Standing near the lake: Reflections of my Métis identity

Student Principal Investigator (SPI): Bob Montgomery
Graduate Student
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
Brock University
bob.montgomery@brocku.ca

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Mary Breunig Associate professor
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
Brock University
1(905)688-5550 ext 5387
mbreunig@brocku.ca

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in a research project on Métis identity. The purpose of this study is to reflect on my Métis history and identity through journals, historical documents and interviews with other Métis people. Your participation in the research will provide context for me to reflect on my own understandings of my Métis identity. Ages of participants may vary however participants must have significant life experience and opportunity to make sense of their identities, therefore participants must identify as Métis and be older than 25 years of age.

WHAT'S INVOLVED
As a participant, you will be asked to engage in an interview of approximately 1 – 1.5 hour(s) regarding your experiences of identifying as a Métis person. Interviews will take place in person or over the phone with your consent, interviews will be audio recorded.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS
There are minimal anticipated risks associated with participation in this study however, discussions of identity may evoke sad or confused memories. If painful memories come up during an interview that line of questioning will be stopped, additionally you may stop the interview at any time. A list of culturally appropriate resources is provided below should you feel upset and want to seek support. By participating in this study you are adding to the breadth of Métis research in academic settings.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you provide will be kept confidential. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator will have access to the data. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study without your consent; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. If you prefer to have your actual name associated with your interview please let me know by indicating this below. Otherwise please select a pseudonym. After the interview, I will send you a copy of the transcript of our interview to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points as you wish.

Participants are asked to select a comfortable and private area to participate in the interview to ensure confidentiality. (eg. A private residence or quiet café)

Data collected during this study will be stored in a password protected digital audio file on an external hard drive. After transcription the data will be stored in a locked drawer in Dr. Mary Breunig's office at Brock University. Data will be kept for a period of seven years for review and/or publication purposes after which time all audio files, hard copy and electronic copies of transcripts will be destroyed or returned to you.

Access to this data will be restricted to Dr. Mary Breunig and Bob Montgomery.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time. If you choose to withdraw, any audio file, hard copy or digital copy of your interview and associated transcript will be destroyed.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

Results of this study may be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If work is published with this information, a copy of the manuscript will be sent to you for verification prior to submission. Feedback about this study will be available through myself at **bob.montgomery@brocku.ca**. You have the option of requesting a digital copy of the completed project and/or sections that contain information you have provided.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Bob Montgomery using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University **[file # 14-015]**. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

1. I consent to the use of my name **OR** I prefer to use the pseudonym below

_____ _____
Name Pseudonym

_____
Signature

2. I consent to Audio Recording of interview: Yes____ No____

3. Please destroy transcripts after 7 years _____

OR

Please return transcripts to me after 7 years _____

4. I would like a digital copy of the project upon completion Yes_____ No_____

If yes,

The entire project_____

OR

Sections that my interview contributed to_____

CONSENT FORM
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

List of Aboriginal support resources

Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program Alberta Regional Office
Toll free: 1-888-495-6588

National Indian Residential School Crisis Line
Toll free: 1-866-925-4419

Native Counseling Services of Alberta
10975 – 124 Street Edmonton, Alberta T5M 0H9
Ph: (780) 451-4002 Fax: (780) 428-0187
Web: http://www.ncsa.ca/online/

Canadian Native Friendship Centre
11728–95 Street NW
Edmonton, AB
T5G 1L9
Phone: 780.761.1900 Fax: 780.760.1900

Aboriginal Friendship Center of Calgary (AFCC)
#101, 427 - 51 Avenue SE
Calgary, Alberta
T2H 0M8
(403) 270-7379
Web: http://www.afccalgary.org

Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society
1709-2 Avenue S
Lethbridge, AB T1J 0E8
Phone: 403.328.2414 Fax: 403.327.0087

Napi Friendship Association
P.O. Box 657 Pincher Creek AB
T0K 1W0
Phone: (403) 627-4224 Fax: (403) 627 -2564
Web: http://www.okinapi.com/home/

Health Canada First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region
Canada Place, Suite 730 9700 Jasper Avenue Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4C3
Toll Free: 1-855-809-6966 Teletypewriter: 1-800-465-7735 (Service Canada)
Community Programs:
Phone: 780-495-6148 Fax: 780-495-7338
Contribution Agreements Resource Centre:
Phone: 780-495-8789 Fax: 780-495-2687
eHealth Solutions Unit:
Phone: 780-495-8778 Fax: 780-492-8920

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
Faculty of Applied Health Sciences

Brock University
Niagara Region
500 Glenridge Ave.
St. Catharines, ON
L2S 3A1 Canada
T 905.688.5550 x3259
F 905.984.4843

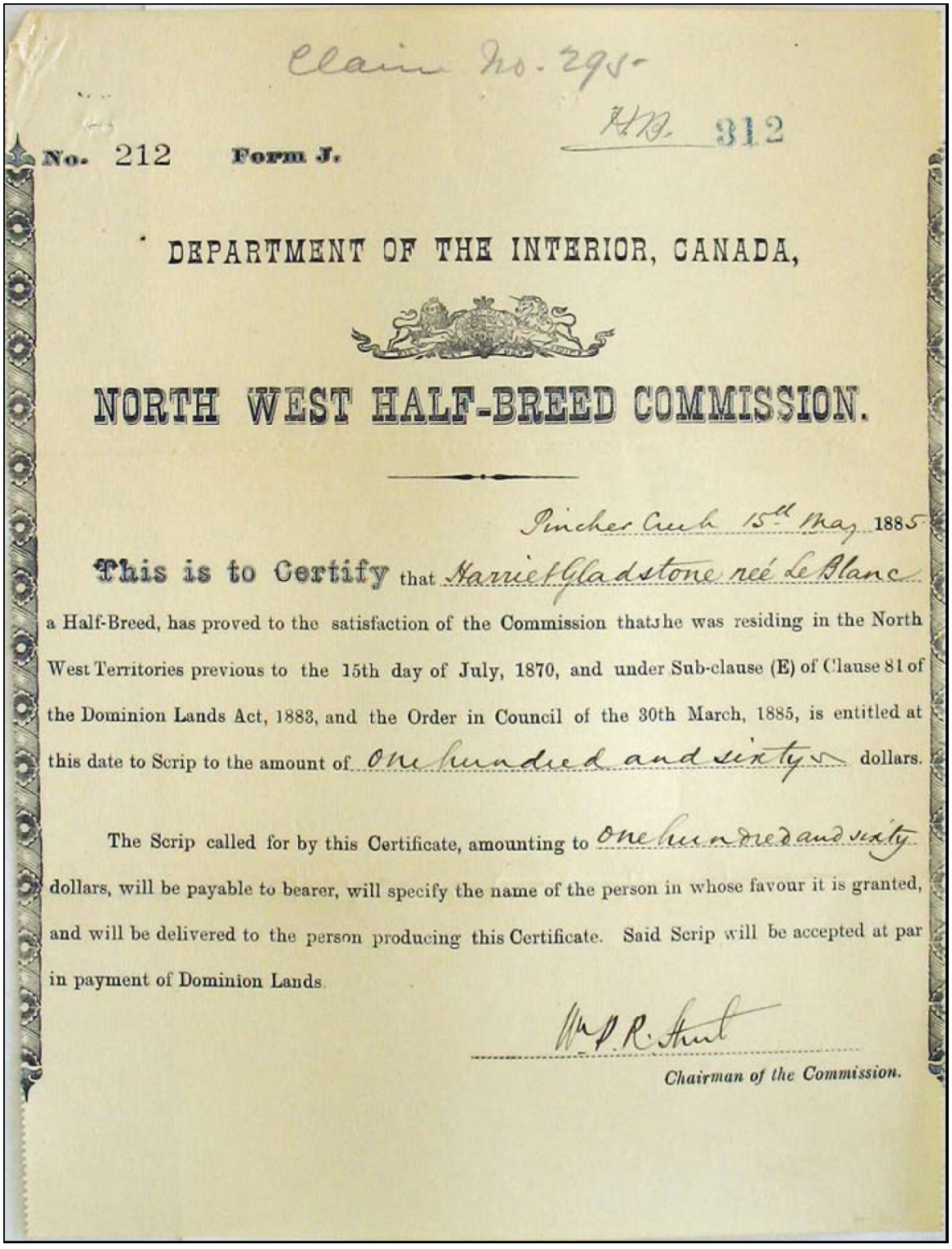
brocku.ca

Interview guide

1. What is your name? What are you called? Do you have any other names?
    a. Is your name important to you? What is the story behind your name?
2. Where are you from?
    a. What do you know about your ancestry and where they are from?
3. How did you come to know that you are Métis?
    a. Can you describe a story of how you were brought up?
    b. Do you speak Michif, Cree, Blackfoot, French, Bungee, Gaelic or any other languages that may be associated with Métis culture?
4. How would you describe your knowledge of Métis cultures and history?
5. What does it mean to you to be Métis?
6. Are you familiar with colonization and decolonization?
7. Have you experienced any moments of uncertainty or ambivalence in your identification as a Métis person?
8. Similarly, have you experienced any moments of feeling situated or grounded in your Métis identity?
9. Do you feel that you participate in Métis culture?
10. What other cultural influences do you have besides Métis? (eg. Scottish, French, English, Cree, Blackfoot, Anishnaabe).
11. Is your identity associated with, or tied to land in anyway? How so?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me.
Mahsi-cho
Bob

Appendix 5: Scrip Application of Harriet Gladstone nee Leblanc



Claim No. 295

H.B. 312

No. 212 Form J.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, CANADA,

NORTH WEST HALF-BREED COMMISSION.

Pinchers Creek 15th May 1885

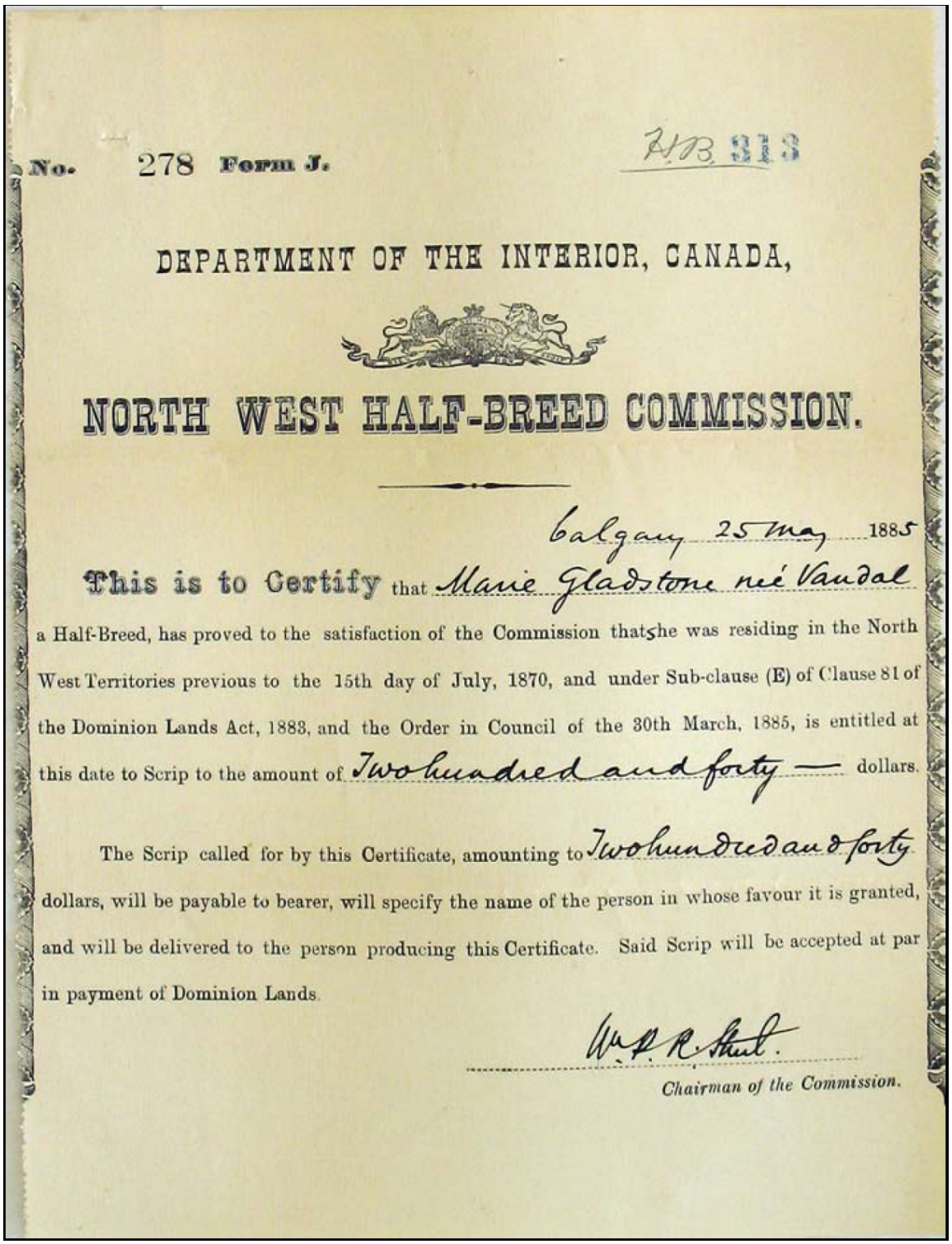
This is to Certify that Harriet Gladstone née LeBlanc a Half-Breed, has proved to the satisfaction of the Commission that she was residing in the North West Territories previous to the 15th day of July, 1870, and under Sub-clause (E) of Clause 81 of the Dominion Lands Act, 1883, and the Order in Council of the 30th March, 1885, is entitled at this date to Scrip to the amount of One hundred and sixty dollars.

The Scrip called for by this Certificate, amounting to one hundred and sixty dollars, will be payable to bearer, will specify the name of the person in whose favour it is granted, and will be delivered to the person producing this Certificate. Said Scrip will be accepted at par in payment of Dominion Lands.

Wm. D. R. Hunt

Chairman of the Commission.

Appendix 6: Scrip Application of Marie Gladstone nee Vandal



No. 278 Form J.

HB 313

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, CANADA,

NORTH WEST HALF-BREED COMMISSION.

Calgary 25 May 1885

This is to Certify that Marie Gladstone née Vandal a Half-Breed, has proved to the satisfaction of the Commission that she was residing in the North West Territories previous to the 15th day of July, 1870, and under Sub-clause (E) of Clause 81 of the Dominion Lands Act, 1883, and the Order in Council of the 30th March, 1885, is entitled at this date to Scrip to the amount of Two hundred and forty — dollars.

The Scrip called for by this Certificate, amounting to Two hundred and forty dollars, will be payable to bearer, will specify the name of the person in whose favour it is granted, and will be delivered to the person producing this Certificate. Said Scrip will be accepted at par in payment of Dominion Lands.

W. D. R. Hunt.

Chairman of the Commission.